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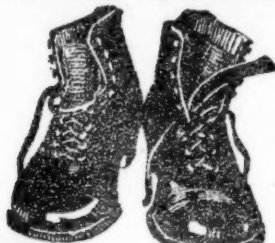
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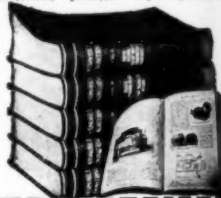
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AINSLIE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

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AINSLIE'S

VOL. XLIV.

NOVEMBER, 1919.

No. 4.



The Second Death of John Mann

By Eugene Boylan

NOW and then, during the month after my return to San Francisco, I dropped in at the Bohemian Club, where I met up with that old seafarer, Captain Briggs. To this period of fellow making belong also Tom Shaughnessy, the playwright, and Charlie Hatch, who was at home in Bohemia just as Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee was at home in King Arthur's court. And so fortuitous were these acquaintances, and others resultant, that I noted no lifting of a curtain, discerned not the converging of fate lines that terminated in murder.

On the first day of August, at seven in the evening, I waited with Shaughnessy in an Italian restaurant for the arrival of Captain Briggs and Hatch's wife, whom I was to meet for the first time. On the morrow, I was to make one of Hatch's guests at his country house, where I hoped to find leisure to work on a book that I was writing. There is something humorous about that hope as I look back upon it in the light of what awaited me at the Hatchery.

As we waited for Janet Hatch and the captain, Shaughnessy briefly ex-

plained to me the customs of the household of which I was to become one. Hatch, otherwise impecunious, was incongruously possessed of a spacious rural domicile and unlimited hospitality. His guests had only to entertain and, incidentally, to feed themselves, and occasionally to replenish the repair fund when the roof leaked.

"Which means," said Shaughnessy, "that you'd better eat a square meal to-night. How about a cocktail?"

My refusal brought a nod of approval.

"Wise head! One never knows in this town when one is going to need one's wits badly."

Was I going to like this man Shaughnessy, I wondered. My work as a civil engineer along the far shores of the Pacific had never brought me into contact with his kind. The stamp of New York was upon him; I had no objection to that, but it was something new in my experience. I liked better the fact of his Irish birth. Brilliant he was, or at any rate uncommonly clever, with at least one successful play to his credit. But, generally speaking, I distrust handsome men. To my way

of thinking, Shaughnessy's classic features were a shade too small and too delicately molded. However, his chin saved his masculinity—it was firmly indented by a deep cleft. His hair was definitely red, and his blue eyes were somewhat light of hue.

He had a habit of indulging in long, rambling monologues, during which, rapt by his own wisdom, he forgot his audience completely. He entered upon one now, and as my cue was to lend him just enough attention to know when he stopped, I let my interest wander to the other occupants of the room.

Who was that big fellow who had just come in and was passing near us? I had a strong impression that I had seen him before, but where or when I could not recall. He was a man of about fifty, tall, powerful, rawboned, with a certain presumption in his carriage and a suggestion of restrained rudeness in his gait. He seated himself at a small table next the wall, his side toward me. I scanned his face. A rugged one it was, the nose was high-bridged and long; beneath it a heavy chin descended unevenly, giving the profile effect of a rough, ragged tracing on the arc of a circle. He exactly fitted my idea of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

I watched his deliberate stare shift from face to face in the room. For a moment it met mine, and I hung on the verge of a recognition that yet somehow baffled me. Without looking at the menu, he gave an order to the waiter. Evidently the latter did not understand, for he bent forward interrogatively and was met by an angry, insolent glare. Under it he quailed visibly and nervously handled a carafe. Then the choleric guest flashed into a sudden change of manner; the hard face accomplished an amazingly gracious smile. The waiter responded with smirking avidity.

"A master of timorous men," I re-

marked, really thinking aloud, but Shaughnessy mistook me as referring to our expected fellow diner, whom he had just happened to mention.

"Captain Briggs," he modified, "is a master of fate, maybe, and certainly a master of bullheaded luck. A while ago, he was just a tramp-steamer captain who had lost his boat in a typhoon. The newspapers gave him less than a column. Then a magazine man discovered him and featured him through two issues. Bohemia heard about his thousand-mile trip in an open boat—fraction rations, icy sea water—all that tragedy stuff—Hello! Speaking of the devil, he appears! Good evening, captain. Janet—or, rather, Mrs. Hatch—I'm pleased to present Mr. Elbert Telfair. Be nice to him—but don't overdo it."

Janet Hatch was removing her cloak. For a moment her slim hand tightened upon the folds that had dropped from a sloping white shoulder, while her big, dark eyes flashed questioningly at Shaughnessy. And her answer was ready upon her own lips—just a mocking little smile. Then, with bright friendliness, she turned toward me, revealed in evening dress—old rose. Her long, slender arm, so frankly extended, was singularly round and white. All this I caught in a glance that went swiftly to the dark hair coiled demurely about a well-shaped head. Then I met her eyes and lost track of other details—might, indeed, have been pardoned for losing myself, though I didn't.

When we were seated, I had the lady at my right and the captain opposite me. The latter, after a tidy adjustment of his napkin, abruptly drew back his head and accorded me a direct, but inoffensive scrutiny.

"You don't look like the rest of 'em," he observed, and then, noting my surprise, added: "I mean the rest of these people who write books. Most of 'em were never out of sight of land. Might

as well write up the log of a canal boat."

"Mine isn't a nautical subject," I replied. "It's mathematical—very technical. It's a theory for the computation of errors."

There was a disconcerting display of mirth around the table. Shaughnessy clasped his hands, and cocked his head as if his ears had been treated to a fresh and pleasing note. The old sailor uttered something between a cough and a chuckle, and from the lady at my side I caught a sound of politely restrained laughter.

My profession is no joke to me, and it was a hot face that I turned toward Mrs. Janet Hatch. She was looking across at Shaughnessy, but evidently she sensed my glance, for an indefinable, softening change came over her face before she met my look. I had thought her thin and a little cynical, but now with sudden artfulness, she compelled me to doubt. Some trick of girl's demureness was still at her command. With a pretty droop of her head, she turned to me, lifting her black eyes.

"I think," she said, "that you and I are wondering why we can't have some dinner."

A waiter attended to our orders. In the interval, my attention again strayed to the strange man at that farther table, and just in time to surprise his intent stare in our direction. His hand, holding a table knife, had dropped to his side. His brows were drawn hard above his high, arrogant nose. Whether his scrutiny was fixed upon Shaughnessy or Captain Briggs or Mrs. Hatch, I could not tell. Then his eyes met mine fairly, and a look of perplexity came into them. Directly he turned to E's table and rested his cheek on a concealing fist.

"A theory for the computation of errors," Shaughnessy recited. "Gad,

but you've found your field, all right! You've a laugh coming, yourself, when you've been with us a while at the Hatchery. It's the home of errors. Listen to a synopsis of this modern comedy. The house was built by John Mann. Properly placed in history, John would have been a buccaneer, but a necessary adjustment to his time and locality made him a crooked California land promoter. Maybe you think a man needs to own lands and mines before he can deed them away and make money. A mere man does, but John Mann was a superman. He was a big man with big schemes and little scruples. So he built him a country house with other people's money."

"Dear me!" said Janet Hatch. "Can't you let John Mann rest. He's dead, you know."

She spoke with a quick lightness, her eyebrows lifted. Shaughnessy must have detected a taunt, for he frowned.

"Very good, but there's no one to mourn him—save you, Janet." Here he laughed unpleasantly. "And cruel circumstance denies you the wearing of weeds."

I glanced at the woman. Her face was no longer white—it was turning crimson. She had started slightly forward, and then, with better control, leaned slowly back. Now she turned toward me with bright, cleverly feigned eagerness.

"Let me tell the comedy—the tragedy—comedy," she said. "Our house—the house that John Mann built—isn't the only house in those pretty foothills. It neighbors the home of Felix Rivas, whose Spanish ancestors lived somewhere about here in the old mission days. He was John Mann's friend—or something. And his daughter, Dorotea, is a very pretty girl. One day, three years ago, Mr. Rivas was struck with paralysis. He thought he was going to die. Next day a priest came and married Dorotea to John Mann. It was her

father's request, with the design of Mann behind it."

"No comedy yet," Shaughnessy sneered.

"Just wait," said Janet. "The poor girl was in a horrid dream, and the man she had wed passed out of her dream that same day. He came up to the city. Something went wrong with his crazy affairs. He disappeared—sailed out of the Golden Gate and was never heard from again until Mr. Shaughnessy located him at the bottom of the sea. You see, Tom now wants to marry Dorotea. Isn't it awkward? You know the child is a good Romanist. She couldn't consider divorce as a means of release."

At this moment the waiter brought a first course, and before Janet could resume her narrative, Shaughnessy put in guardedly:

"That's about all of that, Telfair, but before Janet finds any more slants on the subject, I'll just add that I located three men who could swear to Mann's loss at sea. He was aboard an island schooner, out from Honolulu, which foundered and went to pieces in a gale on the thirteenth of last January. No man returns from the place where John Mann has gone."

"I hope not," said Janet sweetly, "because you'd have to make him dead all over again."

Shaughnessy voiced his irritation in a short, rough laugh.

"I don't know. If your husband, Charlie, got excited over his many grievances against Mr. Mann, he might beat me to the tragic deed."

Illuminating as this dialogue had been, its somewhat acid quality annoyed me. Evidently Captain Briggs was likewise affected.

"Speaking of this soup," he remarked, "you ought to have smacked those soaked sea biscuits a few days after I lost my steamer. Just you sit twenty-three hours and fifty-nine min-

utes on the thwart of a galloping whale-boat waiting for mealtime!"

"Captain," said Janet, "you're a darling old sea dog! Tell us about it."

In rather a rambling way, the old sailor entertained us while our dinner progressed, finally relating, in restricted detail, another of his escapes from shipwreck; collision it had been with a Chinese junk off Manchuria. Without a trace of emotion, he pictured a scene of bobbing bits of wreckage, drowning humanity, and polyglot imprecations hurled at a frowning sky.

This incident roused Shaughnessy from a moody silence to observe, with a marveling shake of his head:

"Of course you got clear of it. Captain, you're a superman! Lucky for some of us that John Mann didn't know as well as you how to cheat Davy Jones!"

I think the rest of us were all annoyed, for the name of Mann had not augured harmony. Janet Hatch pointedly turned in her chair and for the first time interested herself in the other people in the restaurant. I followed her wandering gaze and thus saw exactly what happened.

Lone at his table, the big man of my recent observation had lighted a cigar and, turned squarely about in his chair, was looking our way. This time his gaze remained fixed.

I heard a quickly drawn breath at my side. Janet Hatch had seen him. A cord stood hard on the side of her neck. Her delicate hand clenched in a nervous grip on the chair back. Then, without a word, she rose to her feet, and instinctively I rose with her. I could see that she was trembling.

"Were you going?" I asked idiotically.

Janet's eyes swept past me and dwelt a moment upon Shaughnessy. Then, with a new confusion, she dropped again into her chair, and as quickly rose to her feet once more.

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* "Yes," she said. "I think I'll have my cab."

At this the captain stood up, looking decidedly mystified, but unruffled. Shaughnessy alone remained seated, his usual sophisticated smile upon his face.

"Sit down, Janet," he said. "I promise not to say another word."

"I should think not!" she exclaimed with an hysterical laugh.

Captain Briggs acted with decision. He lifted Janet's cloak to her shoulders and gently turned her toward the entrance

CHAPTER II.

"A woman," said Captain Briggs, "is like a schooner before the wind and a following sea. You can't tell when she's going to yaw on the course."

This bit of wisdom was proffered me after our arrival at the Bohemian Club. On the way there, not much had been said concerning the recent episode in the restaurant. Once Shaughnessy had averred that it beat all how some women could shoot off the artistic temperament. But now a round-table group had attracted our disgruntled playwright, while the captain and I had sought a quiet corner by ourselves.

"I suppose you're wondering," my companion continued, "why they messed up trying to tell how errors make a comedy down at the Hatchery. Can't be told—that's why. Got to see it to understand. The funniest and sorriest part of it is Charlie Hatch."

"I know him," said I. "That is, I knew about him back in Indiana and saw him now and then. He was my brother's classmate."

"I've seen copies of the newspaper he ran"—The captain broke off in a laugh.

"Then I guess you understand why I can't get used to his being out here with this crowd. He was born for his old job of country editor—seemed to be fixed for life, although he was too un-

practical to make money. Is he making any here?"

Captain Briggs made a grimace.

"Brought out thirty thousand dollars and found John Mann ready to gobble every cent of his cash. I don't know how Mann ever committed the unprofessional blunder of giving him a real mortgage on that house. It was the only security that was worth paper and ink. Hatch finally foreclosed and moved in. There he sticks—won't sell or budge. Couldn't keep the place up if it weren't for his guests. Now and then they pay for an odd job of upkeep. Everybody goes it alone down there—cook all over the place—fire-places, chafing dishes—anywhere but the kitchen. Hatch himself lives on raw food. Keeps healthy enough and writes articles that don't get read."

A few years before, Charles Hatch, an Indiana country editor, had given space in his paper to an amateur story writer. Bright she had been, and ambitious, and pretty besides. It had not been long before the girl, in her early twenties, had married Hatch, who was near to forty. Charlie was lovable enough, and the girl had been greedy for his literary encouragement. Probably she had not yet realized the possibilities of life away from her home town.

But she had not been long in finding them out. At the end of a year, she had accepted a position on the staff of a Chicago paper. This had been understood to be a temporary absence. Hatch had been powerless, in his poverty, to advance her career, and a career she had demanded. Aggravatingly, he was joint heir to a land tract of considerable sale value, but unproductive under his lax management. It could not be sold until his younger brother came of age. That event had not occurred until about the time that John Mann, in far-away California, had been nearing the end of his much frayed rope.

Meanwhile, Janet Hatch had contributed extensively to magazines and newspapers. Moving from city to city, she had at last brought up in San Francisco. Hatch still figured in her affairs to the extent of a letter a month.

Then two events had occurred with awkward coincidence. Charlie Hatch had sold his land and his newspaper and, despairing of his wife's return to the sleepy home town, had prepared to join her in California. And just at this time Janet Hatch had met John Mann. That had been an ill day for the lady. She had met her master. Doubtless Mann had counted the infatuation as only an asset in his business. Certainly he had made use of it when her unsuspecting husband arrived. In the shortest possible time, Hatch had exchanged twenty thousand dollars of his capital for worthless securities. Janet, perhaps, had been unconscious of complicity, or at any rate had been blinded by the sorry muddle in her affections. Also, she had not known that Mann was even then planning to marry Dorotea Rivas, did not discover that he had done so until long afterward.

But Hatch seems to have retained at least a small degree of wariness, for he had refused to part with his last ten thousand until John Mann tempted him with a mortgage on his country place. The promoter had been hard pressed about that time, for a back-throw of his Machiavelian finance had driven him to the unaccustomed expedient of honesty in order to procure ready cash. And he had played the game to a finish, had John Mann, even to his secret marriage with Dorotea Rivas. But the looming criminality of some of his transactions had forced him to flight immediately thereafter.

A portion of this record I had from Captain Briggs, that evening at the Bohemian Club; gossip that my friend excused with the words:

"It wouldn't be a square deal to let

a green hand like you sign up at the Hatchery without knowing the kind of crew he's shipped with. Besides, they all make free with each other's private business, all of them except Dorotea." Here he suddenly pointed his cigar at me. "Telfair," he questioned, "are you a married man? Got a girl anywhere?"

"Not the marrying kind," I answered decisively. "Need all my time for mathematics."

Captain Briggs emitted an incredulous "Umph!" For a moment he smoked on in silence. Then: "If anything would make me happy, it would be to see Tom Shaughnessy in the ring with a good scrappy rival. If I were twenty years younger, I'd take Dorotea aboard and show my transom to that conceited Irish New Yorker. She's the prettiest creature that ever had to consort with ordinary human craft. And, God, what a life she lives—slave to the whims of her crippled father, tagging his wheel chair over the grounds that adjoin the Hatchery! She wants to become an opera singer, and Shaughnessy promises to put her there if she'll marry him. You see what it would mean to her. But I've seen a queer look of fear in the girl's eyes. Once it was certainly downright terror when her father was speaking of John Mann. The old boy thinks Mann will come back yet."

With my own vague distrust of Shaughnessy, I found myself impersonally interested in the girl's problem.

"Was her father a friend of John Mann's?" I asked.

The captain shrugged.

"I never saw John Mann, but I've been at the Hatchery for six weeks, off and on, and I've heard a good deal about him. Also, I've sized up the old Spanish-blooded fox who was Mann's next neighbor when he built the house. Probably Mann picked Rivas for a sucker in the first place, and then thought better of him. They had a big scheme on the way, ready to launch,

when Mann had to skip—collected a lot of promotion capital from Rivas' aristocratic friends. The plan was to start something like the old grandee system that this part of the coast lived under before Uncle Sam's time. Crazy scheme, but Mann knew that the wilder the idea, the more fools' money it would attract. He claimed he could buy Lower California from Mexico. From all accounts, he was a little batty himself about that dried-up spike of desert. What's the matter, Telfair?"

"Lower California!" I exclaimed. "So that was a hobby with John Mann, was it?"

"Seems so, from what I've heard. Are you troubled the same way?"

I shook my head. Some instinct for effect prompted me to remark that John Mann's return from a supposed grave in the deep sea would indeed be a calamity.

"You're dead right," my companion agreed. "The devil himself would certainly take charge of the deck. It would break Dorotea's heart. Of course she never loved him—was hocus-focused into the marriage and never saw him again. Shaughnessy would have to 'make John Mann dead all over again.'" He laughed shortly as he quoted this fragment of a sally we had both heard at dinner.

"Then there's Charlie Hatch. That man's got a heap more powder in his magazine than some of 'em think. The log of his voyage hasn't been exciting, but I guess I know something about the lonesome watches and the hankering for the home port. Hatch's own wife was John Mann's gateway to her husband's confidence. Hatch got fooled, dishonored—if he knows it—made ridiculous, robbed of most of his fortune. If I were Charlie Hatch, John Mann might as well remain at the bottom of the sea as ever to cross my bows again here in California."

This was more sign of feeling than

I had hitherto observed in Captain Briggs. I suspected that his sympathy for Hatch might have embittered him against the latter's wife, but there was no change in his expression when I mentioned her name.

"Janet," he said, "has been the maddest woman on this coast ever since Mann slipped his cable. He was the only man, I guess, who ever turned the tables on her. But she's stowed the secret, along with her shame. You noticed she even made a show of defending him before Shaughnessy, to-night. However, if she met John Mann, knowing how he played with her, made a tool of her—well, some women in storybooks do murder, and Janet Hatch looks to me like a woman in a storybook."

"She is," I put in heartily. "You all are. This whole business is made up like a novel. Listen! When Janet Hatch started up from the dinner table to-night, she was looking straight at John Mann. He was quietly finishing his dinner a few tables from us."

The captain's provoking imperturbability was disturbed not in the least. He thoughtfully drew out his cigar case and painstakingly refurnished his long amber holder. Then, with a none too cordial movement, he offered me a fresh smoke.

"So you knew the heavy villain all along?"

"Yes and no," I hastily assured him. "I did and didn't know that I did. Don't think that I've been holding back on you—at any rate, not for more than a minute or two. I'll tell you how it happened."

"Last May, coming over from the Philippines, I stopped off in Honolulu. I spent a week or two loafing around, among other places, in a little café that overlooked the harbor. One day a big man came in and selected a chair at my table. He seemed irritated about something and took it out of the waiter.

Overbearing was no name for it. He had that Kanaka so rattled that he overturned a glass. Afterward, this American—I may as well get on by calling him John Mann—said to me:

"You can't get what you want outside the States. But I've learned to start in as if I owned the earth, and then show signs of good nature. Make 'em fish for it."

"And he certainly could play the good-natured rôle when he was so minded. We talked a little, and something got into his big, ugly face that was mighty pleasing and convincing. I had to admit he knew how to manage favor. He sentimentalized so much about California that I asked him why he didn't go back. That fetched me a look that wasn't quite so agreeable.

"Business don't let me," he said.

"For a few days afterward, I seemed continually meeting up with him and always got a gentlemanly nod. He seemed to be a good deal with Chinese merchants, I remember. Once I met him down on a wharf. A Japanese warship was just putting to sea. The papers, that morning, had contained something about that old bugaboo of Japan's designs on Magdalena Bay. So we got to talking about Lower California, or rather, he did.

"I had a scheme once," he said, 'to buy that whole peninsula.' Then he added that he had had too damn' many schemes, and I remember that he looked at me pretty sharply and turned away without another word.

"I never saw the man again until to-night, when Shaughnessy and I were waiting for you. He came into the restaurant and sat over near the wall—made the same irascible lead with the waiter. Even at that, I couldn't seem to recall where I had seen him before. It makes a big difference when a man leaves off wearing white ducks. I caught him looking at us in a queer way, and I don't need to tell you what

happened the moment Janet Hatch got her eyes on him."

Captain Briggs nodded quickly.

"You mean the big, high-prowed chap at the side table? Wore a broad-striped suit? I saw him—don't think I'd forget him. And I've thought, all along, that Shaughnessy's proof of Mann's drowning was hardly hole proof. Nobody really saw him fill with sea water. I suppose the law would recognize affidavits from common-sailor wreck survivors, but I'm pretty well acquainted with that class of people. Suppose somebody paid 'em a little money——"

Just here we were interrupted by Shaughnessy's approach from another room. The cock of his head and the watery glitter of his light-blue eyes betrayed some indiscretion in the number of his drinks.

"Come on. Get your hats," he directed. "Somebody just said this was a wicked city by night—up to us to prove it."

The captain looked him up and down. "Tom," he advised, "if you're going to get married soon, you'd better settle down to sober training. What are you waiting for, anyhow? It's been some time since you placed the girl's bothersome husband on the deep-sea bottom.

Shaughnessy scowled.

"Look here," he declared. "I'm tired of having you make light of those sailors' affidavits. I only assisted the law in determining John Mann's demise."

"Funny things happen," the older man persisted. "I've known sailors to lie—do it myself sometimes. Suppose, now, that Mann did show up again. Ugly fix you'd be in."

Shaughnessy gestured disgust.

"Fix! Only one kind of fix, in that event. I'd fix the old land pirate for eternal keeps!"

"Which is foolish and risky talk," said Captain Briggs.

CHAPTER III.

San Francisco under the sunlight smiles in a manner to put shame on a glooming face. We had arranged to leave for the Hatchery at two in the afternoon, and meanwhile, for delight of crossing the bay, I went over to Berkeley. There, as I had expected, I found Charlie Hatch probing for historical material in the university library. We left in company, but somehow his continued preoccupation suggested moroseness, and very little did he say until we were again on the ferry, slowly swinging back across the great harbor.

A strong, cool trade wind was driving in through the channel, but Hatch disdained the lee of the deckhouse. With close-buttoned coat, he led me up into the broad bow. Before us was the brave promontory that shoulders high the light gray buildings of San Francisco.

Then suddenly my friend remarked: "If I'd ever been money mad, I suppose I should be better able to get the meaning of all this."

I looked at him sharply. He was standing with his head bared, and the thick mass of iron-gray hair that bristled back from his forehead seemed to elevate his rather short stature.

"The meaning of what?" I asked.

"The triumph of that city there." He faced me with his head tilted characteristically backward. Underneath his bushy eyebrows, the fire of anxious earnestness burned in his deep-set gray eyes. Why, Mr. Telfair, the men who entered that channel in '49 had just one idea in common. Every man thought it was his own secret. He was going to beat the others to the best diggings, and then scatter the gold."

I laughed aloud. Earnest soul; he was in the same comic case as some others who have tried to make philosophy out of history.

"What's the difference?" I suggested.

"Right now, San Francisco can boast more hospitality than any other place on earth, and it claims that the keynote of its good cheer is the spirit of '49. Those old gold gluttons must have had a little of the precious metal in their own hearts, after all."

"I'd like to think so," he said in a low tone. "I'd like to think there was some good in every man, even though he were money mad. Telfair, it's the devil's business to hate anybody, and worst of all to hate a man who is dead, who was drowned at sea."

A trace of malignance sounded in his tone, despite the sentiment expressed. It verified my guess that, after all, he was thinking, not of those earlier gold seekers, but of John Mann.

The engines stopped, and our round bow nosed into its slip at the Ferry Building. Hatch looked at his watch.

"We've just time to catch that train," he said. "I want you to meet my wife. Oh, I've forgotten—you did meet her last night. You haven't mentioned it, Telfair. Did the dinner go off all right?"

So it began, my task of guarding the secret of John Mann's reappearance from Charlie Hatch. At present I can see no good reason why I should have deemed this course so essential, but it had been a tacit agreement between Captain Briggs and myself.

We took a taxi to the Southern Pacific Depot, where we met Shaughnessy and the captain as we were passing through to the train. Janet was already aboard. I found myself greeted by a somewhat nervous clasp of the lady's hand, while she remained seated. Perhaps there was an anxious look in her searching dark eyes, but her languid smile hinted at no uneasiness.

She glanced past her husband and the captain and rested her gaze magnetically upon Tom Shaughnessy. Evidently her antagonism toward the cap-

tious playwright had been temporarily suspended. She motioned him nearer.

"Tom," in a tone of maternal sweetness, "where *have* you been getting that weary look on your handsome face? Sit down here and confess to me."

And Shaughnessy, whose vanity was his one vulnerable spot, did as he was bid.

Charlie Hatch looked relieved, if anything, and, fishing a small volume from his coat pocket, made for a vacant seat farther down the aisle. I felt a touch upon my arm, and, turning, found that Captain Briggs was thoughtfully observing the animated solicitude Janet was displaying for the man she had chosen as companion. Producing a cigar case, he remarked:

"Come, Telfair, there's room for us in the smoker."

At the other end of the train, he and I indulged in silence until the first ash had fallen from our cigars. Then I mentioned:

"Captain, you said something last evening by way of comparing a woman to a schooner off the wind. What was that about yawing on the course?"

"Didn't make it strong enough," asserted the gray-haired mariner. "Janet Hatch tripped her boom and gybed like a catboat this noon. Telfair, what would you think if the lady in question asked you to take her to lunch, for a confidential talk, and then forget you for somebody else?"

"Maybe if you were younger——" I began facetiously, and then hesitated in fear of giving offense.

The captain took up my words:

"I shouldn't need to be much younger to come in the same class with John Mann, and I swear to Heaven I'm better looking than he is!"

"Explain the pertinence."

"Well, then, do some listening. Last night, as you know, I had Janet on my hands. First, you must understand that Charlie Hatch and his wife are a queer

pair. When they go to the city, they trot off to different stopping places quite as a matter of course. Hatch knows a professor at Berkeley who comes as near to his own lines as any one could. They don't eat food like ordinary folks. Just now it's a diet of sprouted wheat, maybe a slice or two of graham bread, and a cube of cheese for dessert."

"That accounts for it, then. I was a little puzzled that he didn't dine with us last night. Thank the Lord he didn't!"

"And that's why I played escort to Janet," the captain went on, "that and the other reason that she and Shaughnessy don't hit it off very amicably."

"After Janet chased herself out of that restaurant, we had to wait a bit on the sidewalk for a cab. I remember she stepped up to me so close that her breath came on my cheek. I believe I've never seen bigger, blacker eyes in a whiter face."

"Captain," she says, 'I suppose you're surprised at this.'

"I put my hand on her arm like a father, with, 'I've seen enough to expect all the rest. I don't get surprised.'

"Now what would you find in that speech to make a woman almost hug you in public, which was what happened along with her avowal:

"I believe you. You're an old dear—to be trusted. I want to talk to you before we go back to the Hatchery. Take me to lunch to-morrow."

"Then I handed her into the cab and got my orders to telephone her in the forenoon."

"Here's where it gets interesting. About eleven o'clock to-day, I called up the home of her friend, where she visits. A lady's voice told me that Mrs. Hatch had gone and would not soon be back. I must have said something about an appointment for luncheon."

"Oh, yes," says the voice. 'You're the gentleman who called up a little

while ago. Well, she's already started for Dupree's. She was to meet you there, I believe."

"You may think I'm too old for curiosity, but what I did was to run down the list of restaurants in a directory. About noon I sauntered in front of Dupree's; a little, out-of-the-way place it was. I had a good look in as I passed. Janet Hatch was sitting at a table with the mysterious chap you left on a wharf in Honolulu and whom we saw again last night at dinner when Janet lost her nerve."

It was when the train was slowing down for our stop, and I was following Captain Briggs through the car aisle, that something occurred to disturb his humor. A Chinaman, whom we had not noticed in entering, got up before us and made to get off. The captain halted so suddenly that I bumped his shoulder. I heard him mutter something profane, while he met my inquiring glance with a crusty "I don't like Chinamen."

Alighted on the platform, we met the others of our party, and Shaughnessy went with Hatch for the car, an antiquated old chug wagon that John Mann had left on the place. Janet smiled at us brightly and then strolled off by herself. She had not gone far when I saw the Chinaman accost her. I felt certain that he handed her a note, which she lifted to read and then crumpled in her hand. Her arm was very straight and rigid at her side, while the man, with smiling Oriental suavity, was talking.

Came an exclamation from Captain Briggs:

"Aha! John Mann is playing a card! I saw that Chinaman loitering in front of Dupree's restaurant this noon, while Janet was being lunched inside. Maybe those yellow chaps all look alike to you, but I've had experience in sorting 'em out. This fellow looks to me like a

renegade Mandarin in a shabby make-up."

By this time, Janet and the man were approaching.

"Don't laugh!" she began, and then, "What do you think I've done? Here, Toy, take your bundle over there. By'n' by 'long come automobile." Whereupon, she laughed and ended, with a grimace, "I shall have to learn pidgin English."

"I can teach you," said the captain shortly. "But who is Toy?"

"He's the new cook," said Janet, with every appearance of innocence. And then, avoiding the old sailor's steady gaze, she turned and dazzled me with her most gracious smile. "Mr. Telfair, I've been actually worried. We live so like vagabonds at the Hatchery, and I so much desire that you should feel at home. I've hired this cook all in your honor. Now we can all eat in the same room at the same time. What an innovation!"

"I don't think," remarked the captain dryly, "that we'll need to go fishing out there for innovations."

CHAPTER IV.

As was perfectly fitting, the house that John Mann had built spread a confident front to everything lying before it—the magnificent sweep of valley, the distant strip of bay, and the ragged sky line beyond. The outlook at the rear was in decided contrast; rather there was no outlook at all because of a suddenly rearing, thickly wooded mountainside. The building's pretentious width was extended on one side by a spacious porch and on the other by a long pergola, which terminated in what was known as the tea house.

Except for some pre-conceived ideas of conventional arrangement, one never could have fixed upon any particular room in the house as library, dining room, bedroom, or anything other than

all things in one. Each room was a complete domicile in itself, according to the individual guest's preferment. Hatch himself occupied the semidetached tea house, where he toasted his graham bread on an alcohol lamp and prepared his main article of food by sprouting wheat in the pergola.

But now Janet's acquisition of a Chinese cook was to inaugurate a family assemblage at dinner. This first evening, the meal was somewhat delayed, and I strolled out on the front terrace. The sun already had sunk out of sight, but the higher slant of its rays still illuminated the valley. The more distant bay was a ribbon of deep blue, and I could see the pale-brown elevation of Mount Hamilton, surmounted by Lick Observatory.

As I stood in the shadow admiring this outlook upon light and color I heard Shaughnessy's voice behind me.

"Mr. Telfair," he said, "I want to present you to Miss Dorotea Rivas."

The girl stepped forward with her hand extended.

"I'm so glad, Mr. Telfair," she said.

I replied that I, too, was glad.

Shaughnessy laughed irritably.

"Glad about what?"

Dorotea seemed a bit confused.

"I'm glad Mr. Telfair had a safe voyage. You men will think I'm silly, but I should have remained in the Philippines forever before I'd have ventured to cross the ocean. I could never, never go out on the water!"

"I understand," said I. "But sea voyaging is safe enough, in the light of fact. Not so many people get drowned as is sometimes reported."

Shaughnessy put in abruptly.

"We'd better go in to dinner. Dorotea has come over for this innovation wrought by Janet. A woman of magic, that! She waves her wand and says, 'Let there be a Chinese cook!' and there is a Chinese cook."

That first assemblage of our queerly

dissimilar company made its indelible impression. The dining room was large, and its sides of dark, waxed redwood seemed to absorb much of the light from the hanging lamp, so that the round table stood out prominently in a circle of illumination.

"This reminds me——" began Captain Briggs, as he seated himself comfortably beside his hostess.

"It does not!" Janet interrupted. "It doesn't remind you at all of your soggy sea biscuit in that dreadful lifeboat, nor of wiggly live-fish luncheons with the South Sea Islanders, nor of chewing tallow candles in a cave on an iceberg!"

The captain checked his reminiscence, and turned with a kindly smile to the younger woman beside him.

"Dorotea, if you're going to sing for us later, I'll begin to wish this dinner over," he said.

Dorotea looked up at me, and I think I reddened, for in truth my gaze had been pretty steadily upon her. She was fairer than I had expected from her Spanish lineage. Her eyes were brown, and her hair just a shade lighter—red-brown, glorified by the bright light.

"Mr. Telfair, are you fond of music?" Her voice was contralto.

"Yes." I have never declared anything more fervently.

At this, Tom Shaughnessy determined to do some talking about himself, a subject in which I had no very great interest. However, his long, egotistical monologue did serve to emphasize the contrasts of personality and experience around the board. Chiefly of this was I thinking when at last we arose from the table. The inscrutable Toy had served his first dinner, and Janet Hatch, who a few hours before had visibly recoiled at the man's approach, now certainly made a brave show of serenity and satisfaction.

Something prompted me to tarry in that dining room. Possibly it was only a passing interest in one of the pictures

hung there. At any rate, I was standing before the painting when a shuffling of felt-clad feet and the clatter of plates reminded me that Toy was clearing the table. I turned about. The others had gone.

"Fine house," I remarked to his Celestial aloofness. "You got good job—found it very soon."

"Velly fine," said Toy. "Make come job velly soon."

"You made it come out of your sleeve like the fifth ace to the deck. Do you belong in San Francisco?"

"Long time," answered the Chinaman.

I inquired the name of his last employer.

"No fin' out," said Toy. "Velly solly."

He was showing me the blandest countenance that ever sat upon a human being. It provoked me to persist even beyond the injunction of curiosity.

"Perhaps I'm mistaken, but you remind me of somebody associated with an old friend of mine. Toy, do you remember the name of John Mann?" I brought out the question sharply, and a moment later regretted that I had done so.

As for Toy, his memory was again at fault. He had "no fin' out" and was "velly solly." But some one's footsteps had sounded upon a strip of bare floor at the doorway. I wheeled about, consciously, and met the startled look of Janet Hatch. She had overheard my mention of John Mann.

I felt like a meddler, a little abashed, but chiefly I was interested in Janet's face. Slowly she managed a smile.

"Come, Mr. Telfair, we're waiting." She drew me a step or two with her. "We want to hear about the mathematics, and the errors, and the computations, and——"

Something that the lady saw behind me caused her to break off abruptly. Her face grew red with vexation. She

dropped my hands and brushed past me. I turned about in time to see her as she reached the table. She was pointing with her long white arm, and Toy, in much haste, was leaving the room.

Janet sank wearily into a chair, and I went over to her. Why was one always following that woman? She gave me a look that for once seemed devoid of design. At first I barely heard her words:

"What shall I do?" and again, "What shall I do, Mr. Telfair?"

"If I knew a little more——"

She interrupted with a shake of her head.

"You know more than is good, already. You're rather keen, Mr. Telfair. So am I. We're getting on pretty fast in a sort of understanding. Can you imagine why I am so rash as to say all this?"

I could not. The woman's radical change of manner and of tactics had bewildered me. I had known her but twenty-four hours. My concern in the return of John Mann was wholly a matter of sympathy for friends who, save Charlie Hatch, were of recent making. All this mixture of mystery and startling unrestraint was beginning to annoy me; hence a bit of curtness in my reply:

"I think that possibly you are exaggerating the need of early confidence."

Janet turned her face away to conceal its rapidly mounting color. To my relief we heard, just then, the first notes of a song accompaniment struck upon a piano in another room. I turned to go, with the remark that Dorotea had promised to sing for me.

"To sing for you?" Janet had risen, and now her gay little laugh interrupted her words. "How fast we get on at the Hatchery!" But, with tone quickly softened, she hastily added, "I'm a strange woman, Mr. Telfair, and tonight—I'm a little unstrung. You know

my husband lives so in the past that I have got into the counterbalancing habit of anticipating the future. Sometimes I'm happy. At other times, I sense the ominous. I'm not happy to-night. Come. Dorotea has begun to sing."

We crossed the hall and entered the long room which terminated in a sun parlor opening upon the pergola. Our entry was marked by a noticeable tremor in Dorotea's voice, a slight hesitating upon a note. I saw Shaughnessy frown and lean forward.

For some reason, the girl was not doing very well with the Schubert love song, just why it was difficult to determine. Certainly the fault was not in her voice. It was rather that she did not sing the love song-like one who was much in love.

The song ended and Dorotea turned consciously to sort some sheets of music, while Shaughnessy moodily fingered the keys. The sound of men's voices came to me from outside in the pergola. Charlie Hatch and Captain Briggs were in earnest conversation, too low-spoken to be understood. I was about to step out and join them when Dorotea once more began to sing. Instantly my ears were intent.

This time, the girl had selected something that she could render with a full appreciation of its emotion. The song was in German, and as my knowledge of that language was a purely reading one, I could not understand the words. But the thrill that ran over me as the girl's voice rang out told me that her dream of the opera was not such a wild one, after all.

The song over, Shaughnessy, for some reason, got up from his stool and strode away. His hands were jammed deep into his coat pockets, and he all but collided with Janet at the farther end of the room. She laid a gentle, detaining hand upon his arm.

I said something, meaningless

enough, but Dorotea lifted her downcast face, came over to where I was standing in the darkened sun parlor, and answered simply my inquiry as to the meaning of what she had sung.

"Terror." For a brief moment her eyes glowed upon mine. "It was Goethe's 'Earl King.'"

"You sang it wonderfully well."

"Because I'm afraid—of things." Then, as if amused at the gravity of her own low-spoken words, she laughed, and with a prettily childlike manner confided, "I'm dreadfully afraid of the dark, Mr. Telfair."

Quite artlessly she swayed a step nearer for a magic instant, and her small hand touched my sleeve. I marked her Spanish profile, the straight nose with its round tip of beauty, the full curves of her fair throat.

The intentness of my gaze must have embarrassed her, for she stirred restlessly.

"I must be going, I'm afraid," she murmured, with a little movement of departure.

Charlie Hatch and Captain Briggs had come in through the open door, and Hatch overheard the last sentence.

"I'm going for a walk myself," he said, "won't you come?"

Dorotea turned uncertainly to look back into the room. Janet and Shaughnessy were just then passing into the hall together, and Janet's face was not so very far from that of the man beside her. They were looking into each other's eyes.

Dorotea's reply to Hatch began with a note of perplexity:

"All right—suppose you see me home, then."

When they were gone, Captain Briggs rubbed his chin.

"Telfair," he queried, "what the devil do you make of this? Hatch seems to have gone clear off his head to-night. Wants to go to sea with me. Wants to start right away. Says he

never wants to return. Talks about a schooner wreck and getting drowned, same as John Mann. I told him he couldn't go down, with me. I'm the original human cork."

CHAPTER V.

"How fast we get on at the Hatchery!"

So far as the coming fortnight was concerned, Janet's words were prophetic. One evening I gathered up my manuscript with extra care, put it away, and laughed at my own expense. A theory for the computation of errors indeed! I had come to dwell among facts, and chief among them was the fact that I had met the one girl I had ever wished to marry.

The path that never runs smooth never ran rougher, albeit the thought of Shaughnessy brought no compunctions. If the star of Dorotea had not quite declined in his heaven, a new one had arisen. Whatever her questionable game, here Janet was my unconscious ally.

But an ugly obstacle loomed; the piratical John Mann had appeared in the offing. What was he planning? The devil only knew what plot had sent heathen Toy to the Hatchery. I determined to find out. But first of all, I meant to win the love of Dorotea. That done, I would accomplish her release, no matter what obstacles stood in the way.

Luck favored me. Felix Rivas, as I had found on my first call, was something more than a crabbed cripple, though he was all of that. My fluent Spanish woke some sort of liking in his jealous old heart. He invited my daily visits, and I went. The only virtue I can grant him is that he was wont to drop asleep when his chair had been wheeled to some favorite spot on the grounds. Thus I gained precious time with Dorotea beneath the oaks.

At the Hatchery, the mysterious Toy was ever in evidence, and Janet seemed to have some desperate object in bringing Tom Shaughnessy to her feet. Truly the playwright was in difficulty, more than I knew at the time. It did not occur to me to wonder what first had brought him to this strange household or to suspect the truth—that Janet had now but to rekindle a former flame.

One evening Janet remarked:

"Charlie's forgotten all about his guests." Our host had arisen from the table and was abstractedly pacing in and out of the hall. His wife added, an innocent plaint in her voice, "Sometimes I think he's even forgotten about me!"

Captain Briggs shot me a look, plain as words: "Did you get that?" And to the credit of Shaughnessy, a fine sternness surmounted his reddening countenance.

In spite of the fact that it was a cool evening, the attraction of a friendly hearth did not keep the company assembled. An hour or two later, as I came downstairs, the house seemed deserted. There was no light in the living room save a flare from the fireplace. I paused in the doorway just as the lissom figure of Janet Hatch slipped from a chair to the hearth rug, where she lay stretched full length, supported by an elbow. Her posture was languorous, yet I thought her hand swiftly took a bit of white paper from her bosom and tossed it into the flames. Shaughnessy stood his back turned from her, one hand on the mantel, the other thrust deep into his pocket.

In a low tone from Janet: "Look at me, Tom."

For just a moment, the man stood uncertain, began, "I dare not—" Then he suddenly wheeled, stooped, caught her up—Here I balked at my eavesdropping.

"Charlie here?" I inquired.

"No," came the curt answer; and then, after a brief hesitation: "He ought to be, though, I'm trying to order his wife to bed."

"It's my headache," said Janet wearily, but I noticed her accompanying movement had more to do with readjusting her hair. "Tom thinks I work too hard—managing Toy." This last in a drawl.

Thus it came about that I was alone there when finally Hatch did enter. Two or three times he paced the long room in silence. Then his deep voice began, "'By Nebo's lonely mountain——'" Through to the end, he recited "The Burial of Moses."

"Most sublime containment in strong feeling," was all he added in explanation.

I was pondering the significance of this when a question startled me:

"Mr. Telfair, when were you in Honolulu?"

"I arrived there the first of May."

Hatch opened his mouth, closed it, and soon left the room.

The next day was the one before John Mann was murdered.

Some two hundred yards of shaded private walk connected the Hatchery and the Rivas home. Bound there, in the afternoon, I was about midway when I encountered Captain Briggs.

"Sit down," said the captain, making place on his rustic bench, a twinkle in his eyes. "Don't overwork this crony business with Old Man Rivas. You know it got the best of that old hermit."

Near us a path right-angled to one side and, at a little distance, disappeared into a thicket beyond which, I had been told there was a hermit's deserted hut. Bits of the story had come to me of a religious fanatic, who had claimed squatter's rights till he had been found one day hanging dead from a limb with a cask kicked from beneath his feet.

Captain Briggs gave me more:

"He had four Bibles stuffed in his pockets, prayer beads festooned on his shoulders, and his pet parrot hanged beside him, wings bound in a handkerchief."

"Was John Mann here then?"

"Yes; but, according to Hatch, he made light of the squatter claim, except to pester Rivas about it. The hut stood on their dividing line. That path junction marks it."

We turned and noticed that Rivas, in his wheel chair, had appeared, Dorotea with him.

"Telfair," said Captain Briggs, "if some turn of fate should permit a nice young man to marry that girl, do you know what would happen? Her father would near die of rage—but he'd get up and walk again. I call him the limping fox." But they had come near, and the captain altered his tone most genially. "A trim little craft with a heavy tow," called he.

Dorotea, quite boyish in black-and-white shepherd's plaid, paused to unbutton her jacket, for the sun had just burst through a cold sea fog that had chilled us since yesterday. From under his old brown shawl, the cripple's lean hand lifted an unlit cigar toward his long, grizzled mustache.

Captain Briggs stepped forward with a match.

"Mr. Rivas," said he, "there's a chair on your porch that reminds me of the ocean swell. I'm going to wheel you back there. Telfair, you let Dorotea show you that hermit hut."

The old Spaniard began some remonstrance, but was soon wheeled out of hearing.

Dorotea smiled after them.

"The captain's a dear!" she averred.

"He is," I agreed. "He knew exactly what I wanted."

For a moment her smile grew doubtful, then she laughed frankly.

"Did you want me, Mr. Telfair?"

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We walked toward the thicket. Thanks to the narrow way, she was close to my arm. She fell into step with me, turning toward me as she talked, flashing color—a green chiffon waist under the swinging edge of her coat; white felt on her head, green banded; the glint of a gold-nugget hat pin.

"I oughtn't to be happy," said Dorotea. "I'm really afraid. I used to come here to get my father. Almost every day, he came to order the hermit off our land. It was always the same—salutations, a bottle of wine, argument, anger, and the peril of father's soul! The hermit never spared him that at the end or omitted the wine at the beginning. Men are queer things! But it was very bad for my father."

We had come to where the path made a bend to enter the thicket. Suddenly Dorotea paused and looked up at me pleading.

"I'm afraid," she said simply.

My arm went about her. Another moment—But Dorotea was a woman, and she postponed that moment. A note of nervous laughter, "Who's afraid?" a dart forward—and I found her again in a small clearing.

"There's the hut," she remarked. "You go in and turn around, and we'll walk right back again. I'll wait for you here." A glib little speech, yet hinting more flutter than humor, more excitement than her heart dared betray. Still, her eyes would not look away; they came back to mine.

Alone, I entered the hut. Little interest I gave to that interior except that I sensed something indefinable as of its habitancy; despite some delapidation, one might have thought its tenant but an hour gone. Then came a cry from Dorotea outside—a cry of terror.

In my haste out through the low

doorway, my head struck sharply, so that at first, half stunned, I stumbled over the ground.

What had pierced the girl's spirit? Uninjured in body, she yet stood somehow like a broken-winged bird, a few steps away from where I had left her. The gay little coat, clutched now by tense hands, hugged her form closely. Gone was the blitheness. She peered at the thicket beyond the hut.

"His face!" gasped Dorotea. "His face in the bushes! It's gone, but I saw it."

She had turned to me, would have come, but as if something had risen between us, her hands lifted mournfully.

I caught her hands, drew them, had the girl I loved in my arms. And she did not resist. My own breast felt the pulsation of her long-drawn sob.

"It's a spooky place," I told her tenderly. "But hermits' ghosts don't walk by day."

The girl drew away and studied my face with a strange intensity. Her eyes were full upon mine as I said:

"I love you, Dorotea!"

If I had any answer, it was alarm, wonderment in her eyes, a darker glow.

"Come!" she exclaimed, and at the same time moved with determination. Then, when presently the thicket was left behind us, "It wasn't real at all, was it, Mr. Telfair? We'll forget we've ever been there. Won't you help me do that?"

"Dorotea!"

Something like a sob choked her response.

"No, no! I—don't mean just that."

A small hand pressed mine and grew warmer. "But please—not now—"

I nodded my head, which seemed to inspire some return of spirit in her.

"I must go home now," she said. "I'll be over to-morrow evening for dinner and the music."

But I wished to find Captain Briggs;

a mere pretext, to be sure, for continuing on with Dorotea to the Rivas house. There I turned back with the captain, who was just leaving.

"You look as if you'd started up something at that hut," said my friend.

"It's a beautiful day," I remarked.

"Exactly," said the captain. "And while we're in the same way of speaking, I'll let you know that pretty soon I'm going to tell that yellow-faced Toy to go along China side of Pacific Ocean. He's too much all around where he ought not to be. Rivas has just told me that, several times lately, he's seen our Chinaman come from that path to the hut. But for that matter—maybe we'd better slow down."

Janet and Shaughnessy had appeared on the path coming from the Hatchery, still at some distance. We could see that their hands met on Shaughnessy's walking stick.

"I was wondering," said Captain Briggs, "whether somebody should tell those people that their brand of love is the blindest kind. But I don't know as to Janet. She sees us."

Indeed, our approach appeared somewhat to concern that lady. She paused, then turned into the side path to the thicket. Not a look back did she give, but walked slowly. Shaughnessy hesitated, looked our way, again at the woman—and followed.

"He's gone," said Captain Briggs. "God help him!"

We lost sight of the pair until we ourselves arrived at the junction of paths. There one could see that Shaughnessy appeared still reluctant. He had stopped not far from the thicket. Janet went on for a moment. Then, abruptly, she stopped, fell back a pace or two in evident alarm, and lifted her hands before her in a gesture of protest. Wheeling about, she hurried back, snatching at Shaughnessy's hand in passing.

"What would you make out of that?" I asked my companion.

The captain gave me a most enigmatic glance.

"It's a beautiful day, Mr. Telfair."

CHAPTER VI.

The following day was eventful, and inasmuch as the facts were soon in my possession, I will relate the occurrences of the morning in sequence.

It seems that Charlie Hatch entered his wife's room before she awakened and discovered a note that had been thrust under her door. He opened it and read:

"Make haste. I shall not wait much longer. I must see you again. Do not flee from me to-night."

Hatch, it appears, left the room without disturbing Janet. No one remembers seeing him during the forenoon.

About one o'clock, I decided to seek a conversation with my host and probe into his suspicions concerning John Mann. With this purpose, I was crossing through the pergola when I was arrested by the sound of low, but excited words spoken in the tea house. The voices were those of Hatch and his wife. Also, I heard my own name spoken repeatedly in tones far from friendly.

Curiosity forbade my going back, and the rôle of eavesdropper was repugnant. So, affecting what unconcern I could, I walked on.

What a chill it gives one to find, in hitherto friendly faces, an unexplained look of sudden resentment! Add to that a profitless moment of discomfiting silence; I say "profitless," but I believe I did make out at once that Janet's frigidity was fictitious.

"Pardon me," I began. "I just dropped in for a talk with you, Charlie, but——"

"You can have it," came his answer,

in a tone rather of weariness than of anger.

I tried to laugh easily.

"Anything I have to say can wait."

"I think not," said Hatch. His sad gray eyes seemed deeper in their sockets beneath the drawn, shaggy eyebrows. "I think Janet had better hear what you have to say for yourself."

At this I looked hard at the woman, aware now that somehow I had become involved in her mysterious machinations. Frankly, I am better at analyzing the feminine than at meeting a member of the fair sex in a tilt of glances. Janet had her way in forcing a hot, deceptive flush to my face.

Charlie Hatch drew a false inference and acted impetuously.

"Telfair," he said, with a manifest effort to control his feeling, "your brother was my good friend back in Indiana. That's the first reason for your being my guest. But I liked you personally. This is a blow to me. For your brother's sake, I shall not press for an explanation. Nothing more need be said before you leave the house. Shaughnessy, I think, would take you to the station in the machine."

Struggling to control my astonishment, I retorted that my brother would expect me, under the circumstances, to demand an immediate understanding.

"You know, he's a direct, out-spoken man. I am something like him."

Hatch nodded, but Janet spoke quickly. Her face may have turned a shade whiter, but her tone was low, well controlled, almost maternal:

"I think your brother would counsel you to leave quietly. Besides, Mr. Telfair, you couldn't see me again if you remained."

Ah, that was Janet's mistake! I think she regretted her last audacious sentence as soon as it left her lips. I saw a little light.

"Charlie," I said, "if I'm to draw an inference from your wife's insinuation,

I may tell you, upon my honor, that I've never sought her company with impropriety. If there's any false evidence to the contrary, I demand its immediate production."

I think Hatch was impressed by my tone. At any rate, he felt in his pocket and handed me the note I have already mentioned, the one he had found under his wife's door that morning.

I read it twice over, observing from the corner of my eye that Janet had fallen back a step. Meanwhile, Hatch briefly stated the circumstance of the note's discovery, and the genuinely grieved expression I saw on his face tempered the hot words that first occurred to me.

"That's not my hand-writing," I asserted. "You can easily determine as much. I have no actual knowledge of the source of this message." Here I faced Janet and added, "I wish I had no suspicions. However, I've no place in the home of intrigue. I'll leave today." With that I turned away.

Hatch overtook me at the door.

"Telfair," he began in a shaking voice, "I'm hardly in my right mind. I've made a mistake, I can see, or Janet has. I believe what you tell me. Promise not to leave here until I've talked with you again."

I promised and left the tea house.

This much was certain—Janet Hatch knew who had written that message and, confronted by her husband, had sought to conceal the writer's identity by accusing me. The guilty person, presumably, was some one belonging in the house. Who else could it be but Shaughnessy? While my suspicion took the form of certainty, my steps carried me straight through the house till I brought up on the broad porch at the farther side. There I encountered the playwright himself. He had just returned from a tramp up the mountainside. He was clad in khaki and his face was red and perspiring. A

sorry time, indeed, to accuse a man, but my irritation had the better of good judgment.

"Shaughnessy," I blurted out, "I don't care a rap what game you and Janet play so long as you don't make me the goat!"

The man was mopping his face at the moment, and his movements were arrested for an instant only. Then he carefully folded the handkerchief and returned it to his pocket. Arising from the balustrade, where he had been leaning, he looked me up and down:

"You need some sleep—been working too hard. If you let loose like this, you'll be getting yourself disliked."

"I wish it were all in my mind's eye," I answered. "But the look of desperation I've just seen on Hatch's face is no dream. Maybe you haven't learned, but Charlie found the note you slipped under his wife's door."

Shaughnessy stepped nearer to me, and I collected myself for results, but to my surprise his voice did not strike the note of anger.

"Telfair, you and the captain have dropped me out lately, but I'll bet we're in the same way of thinking about some things. Maybe I've seen what you haven't. Something's going wrong about this house. I didn't write any note. I wish you'd tell me what was in the one you speak of."

There was no gainsaying the man's appearance of sincerity, and I related the recent episode. At this, Shaughnessy's wrath broke out, but not against me. He took a turn or two across the porch, cursing under his breath, and then, hurrying down the steps, disappeared around a corner of the house.

For several minutes, I occupied myself with a cigar and with sundry unpleasant thoughts. Then I went to my den, determined to steady myself in the effort of writing. But it was not long before I was interrupted by a knock, and Shaughnessy made excited entry.

"I—will—be—damned!"

At first I could get nothing more out of the man than the opinion that perdition was gaping for everybody. Then I learned that he had gone straight to Janet, who had broken down and confessed that the note had been written by John Mann and had been conveyed by the Chinaman, Toy. Evidently it was not the first missive of the kind. And considering that Shaughnessy, up to that time, had been ignorant of Mann's resurrection from a supposed submarine sepulcher, his present agitation was quite natural. There had been a scene between Janet and Shaughnessy, during which Charlie Hatch had come up and overheard their talk.

"So Hatch knows now that John Mann is alive?" I queried. "Alive and involved in all this?"

"He does, and he took it hard and ugly—just bolted away, crazylike."

"Come," I commanded. "We've got to get to that man and cool him down."

We were too late, however, for just as we passed out of the house, a horseman dashed away from the stable. It was Hatch on his saddle pony. He took the road up the mountain, riding at a gallop.

"Tell me one thing," I said. "Does Janet still love John Mann?"

Even then the look of conceit showed on Shaughnessy's face.

"I should think not! She hates him like a snake, but he's got a twist on her. If I can get close enough to that old beast, I'll see to it——"

"Cut that!" I interrupted. "You once let off some risky talk at the Bohemian Club. Circumspectness will become you right now, my friend."

By six o'clock that evening, I had decided that somehow Dorotea must be prevented from coming over to dinner. Revelations at the Hatchery were threatening a conflagration. Hatch had not returned, but there was no telling

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what would happen. Waiting a few minutes, and observing that Shaughnessy made no appearance, I set out alone for the girl's home. Afterward I was certain that she could not have been on her way to the Hatchery when I left it. I went straight over the path and did not meet her. Yet when I arrived at the Rivas house, I was told by the gardener, Miguel, that Dorotea had already gone.

What with some indecision and the old man's disposition to talk, I tarried for a while before starting back. Later on, I tried to remember just how long I was delayed, but could not.

There was trouble enough at the Hatchery when I finally returned. Walking through the house, I saw no one until I reached the doorway to the porch. There I surprised a scene that was being enacted between Janet and Shaughnessy outside.

Had she been caught in the flame at last, this woman who played with fire? It was Janet Hatch now at the feet of Tom Shaughnessy. He stood squarely, but with head bent and a little aside. And the woman before him? She gave —gave with every line of her tall, lithe figure, gave with the straight outreach of one arm that laid a coaxing hand on his shoulder, gave with a wrist bent in pleading before him. She gave more, for she dropped to her knees, seized his hand, and kissed it.

Abruptly Shaughnessy drew his hand free. Janet sprang to her feet. Gone was her manner of beseeching. I had not heard what had been said, but I had seen some consummate acting. I had seen Shaughnessy somehow refined by suffering brought on himself. And at the same instant I heard his startled voice call out the name of Dorotea.

At the moment I did not know that the girl had come around a corner of the house in time to witness the scene on the porch. For my own part, I had no mind just then to be drawn into

another encounter with Hatch's wife, I returned to the hall and stepped out of the front door just in time to meet Dorotea, who was hurrying blindly by the house. Evidently she had been running. Her hair was disordered, and when I came to her side, she exclaimed wildly:

"Don't touch me! Oh, don't touch me, Mr. Telfair!"

I did touch her—made bold to put my arm about her shoulders and insisted that she come with me into the house. She was panting and did not resist.

The appearance of Captain Briggs relieved me greatly. He looked at us keenly.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "You two look excited."

"Excitement is pretty general," I answered. "You're the only one exempt, I guess."

"Maybe," suggested the captain, "a little food would help. Suppose you see why Toy hasn't called us to dinner."

Just then Janet appeared. To my bewilderment she had regained her self-command and was actually smiling.

"If you men will go away, I want a little talk with Dorotea. You know, women understand each other!"

I, for one, am willing to concede that they do. I'm sure I don't share the understanding. Suffice it to relate that Dorotea flung herself into a seat, weeping, and that Janet sat down beside the girl and drew her into her arms. I departed forthwith in search of the cook.

There was no one in the kitchen. Something was burning on the range. I turned to go out, and met Captain Briggs, who had followed. He was frowning.

"Where's that blasted Chinaman?" he demanded in accents of the quarter-deck.

"I don't know, unless——"

I think we were simultaneously struck with the same idea.

"I'm going to find out," declared Captain Briggs, and as I went with him out of the house, I knew we were bound for the thicket and the hut.

Charlie Hatch appeared, just then, coming from the direction of the stable. He seemed not to see us, or to wish to see us, and was bending so far forward that he stumbled as he walked. The captain called him, and Hatch, after a moment's hesitation, came with us like one in a daze. He made no query as to our destination, and while we were going on down the path, I heard him muttering and caught some lines from "The Burial of Moses."

We turned into the bypath, Captain Briggs marching sturdily ahead. We were close upon the thicket when from out of it a figure came running. It was Toy, at last bereft of his Celestial calm. The captain had him by the arm before he could pursue his flight.

The Chinaman began to chatter unintelligibly. His small stock of English did poor service. However, he managed to repeat:

"Who do? Who do? No fin' out! John Mann velly good frien'!"

Captain Briggs seemed disposed to carry everything and everybody with him, Toy included, and thus there were four of us who passed the thicket.

A few yards in front of the hut lay the lifeless form of a man.

I do not recall that there was an exclamation uttered, save Toy's reiterated "Who do? Who do?"

We brought up in a huddled group. Then the captain released his hold upon Toy and, stepping on, knelt beside the body.

"Shot dead this time," was his locanic announcement.

I moved nearer, with Hatch, and the latter, when he beheld the face of the murdered man, uttered something like a groan and the name "John Mann!"

Suddenly Captain Briggs stood erect and motioned us back from the spot.

His shoulders were squared, and he faced us sternly.

"There's but one thing to do," he began, and then broke off and looked about him on all sides. "What's become of that blasted Chinaman?" he demanded.

"Gone," said I.

Hatch broke in excitedly, "Toy committed this deed! He did this murder!" But he made no move to go in pursuit, nor, for that matter, did we others.

"I think," remarked Captain Briggs, very thoughtfully, "that we'll just let the case rest on that for the present."

CHAPTER VII.

But murder is murder, and it was new to my experience. I found myself irritated by the captain's calm. Who were we to "rest" the case? In a sudden flare of temper, I spoke hotly:

"We've got to act, and be quick about it! Our duty is clear, Toy has slipped away from us—we must hunt him."

"Yes, yes!" from Hatch. "We must hurry. This is awful! I should have acted differently."

Captain Briggs spoke sternly:

"Charlie, you listen to me and do just what I tell you! Go straight back to the house and find out if Toy returned there, but say nothing till we come. Avoid Janet and Shaughnessy. Dorotea is upset by something. Keep away from her."

"Janet! Janet!" muttered Hatch. "Oh, my God!"

The captain caught him by the shoulder and shook him.

"Stand up to it and do what I tell you! You've no time to lose. Telfair and I will take a turn back in the brush."

Obediently Hatch started away, and thus we parted company for the time. Soon after, I was rambling uncertainly through the thickly wooded part of the estate that stretched back behind the

hut. Darkness was deepening. The grounds had had no care for years, and I frequently stumbled in the undergrowth. The captain was making a detour in another direction.

Now that I was alone, I thought swiftly. Somehow I could not harbor the belief that Toy had committed the murder. With sickening insistence came recollections of much that I have recorded, beginning with the dinner in San Francisco, a fortnight before. My sense of duty became greatly confused. Then it occurred to me that we had made very little investigation at the scene of the murder. Was it not highly important to determine, if possible, how long Mann had been dead? With this sop to my conscience, I abandoned the search for Toy and went to the hut.

It was ghastly enough to find myself once more in that quiet spot, this time alone save for the inert body on the ground. With all the determination I could muster, I strode up to the lifeless form. As an added shock, I recognized the same striped suit of clothes that Mann had worn when he had sat at the restaurant table, reminder of the full-blooded arrogance that had supported this strange character through years of determined misdeeds.

The death wound was a bullet hole in the left breast. With a sudden start of recollection, I straightened from my bending position. Why had I not thought of it before? Certainly my wits had been upset. There was no longer any doubt in my mind as to the exact time of the murder. I had heard a shot fired while I was at the Rivas house, and old Miguel had grumbled about the laxness of the game warden. There were poachers about, he had said. Of a dread certainty, Dorotea must have been somewhere on her way to the Hatchery at that time, but I could not understand how she could have gone over the main path, which I myself had taken.

Irresolutely, I was turning away from the body when something white on the ground attracted my eyes. I picked it up. It was a crumpled handkerchief—a woman's.

First I tried to deny the authority of my senses—even started to toss away the lace-bordered bit of linen. But my hands possessed a will of their own; the handkerchief went into my pocket. Came a hopeful thought—perhaps Dorotea had dropped it the afternoon before, on the occasion of her alarm, while I had been in the hut. But no; the thing had been lying at a spot some distance from where I remembered her to have been standing—close to the hut's door, which I was certain she had not then approached.

But why had I not noticed this white object a short time before when I had been here in company with the other men? I felt sure my eyes had then measured the ground between the body and the hut. Perhaps—here was an idea that impelled me to immediate action—perhaps the handkerchief had been dropped *after* we had discovered the murder. It might be that for some reason Dorotea or Janet had followed us when we had left the Hatchery. So, with this conjecture, admittedly far-fetched, I started hurriedly for the house to determine what had happened there since I had left.

The Hatchery was near at hand when my ears caught the sound of a chugging motor. Just then the car emerged from an old carriage shed that served as garage, and turned with a jerk into the driveway. As well as I could see, the driver was unaccompanied. Captain Briggs was crossing over toward the house. He saw me and waited.

"Who was in the car?" I called.

The captain withheld his answer until I had reached him.

"It was Shaughnessy. Shaughnessy is a man of action—he's just told me so. A cool head is needed here, he

says. I think he mentioned a cool head about every other sentence. He's off now to the nearest telephone to notify the sheriff."

My first doubt as to Shaughnessy's actual purpose in his hasty departure was overshadowed by renewed perplexity over the significance of that handkerchief.

"Have you seen the two women?" I questioned. "How long have you been back here?"

"I've told them nothing," said the captain. "They're in there where we left them." My heart sank at his words. "I got back here pretty quick," he went on; and then, after a moment of hesitation, "I think we'll do better to get together on one point, Telfair. I hunted for Toy just enough to make sure of losing him, and it's my guess that you did the same. If he killed John Mann, it's none of our business. If he didn't do the killing, there's a chance that the authorities will nevertheless think that he did, considering that he ran away. Then, supposing that he doesn't get caught, it would clear things up for the present."

Captain Briggs had certainly been voicing the very thought that had been in my own mind, but somehow its candid expression gave me a shock.

"It's easier to distort one's duty than to see it clearly," I replied. "It's my duty to find out positively who killed John Mann."

The captain studied me carefully.

"I get you perfectly, and I still claim that we think alike. But if your future investigation should fasten guilt upon one of your own friends, let me have another talk with you on the subject of duty. For my part, Telfair"—he spoke with a sudden increase of fervor—"before I'd see any one in that house tried for this murder, I'd try to make the court think I did the job myself. An old skipper without a ship doesn't count for much."

Impulsively I caught the man's hand.

"I want you with me in every move I make," I declared. "Now to business. First, how did Shaughnessy behave when you told him of our discovery?"

"That will keep. If we're turning to business, we've first got to consider the ugly job of informing those women. Charlie is alone in his tea house, reciting 'The Burial of Moses.' Come."

We found Janet alone in the dining room. At sight of us, she flung out her hands in a short expressive gesture.

"I shall go distracted—along with everybody else, I guess! The dinner is burned in the kitchen. Toy is nowhere about, and——"

"Where is Dorotea?" I interrupted.

Janet shook her head.

"I don't know. The poor dear, she acted quite beside herself. I couldn't keep her."

"But she hasn't gone home," I protested, "I've just come over that path."

At this moment Charlie Hatch entered. He halted, after two or three determined strides, his hands clasped behind him. His lips moved slightly as if in speech, yet he remained silent. Beside me stood the captain, apparently for once at a loss for ready words.

"Indeed!" Janet answered me, sounding a note of sarcasm. "Not long ago, you left Dorotea weeping in my charge. Now you say you've just come from her home. Please explain, Mr. Telfair."

"All right. I haven't come from the Rivas home. I've come from the hermit's hut."

Janet's face whitened.

"The hermit's hut!" she repeated in a low voice.

Hatch motioned imperatively.

"No more, Telfair. This is my work."

The woman faced her husband, and her hands moved tremblingly toward her breast. Then she flung them before her bitterly.

"Don't speak!" she cried. "Don't tell me! Don't ask me!"

I felt a push behind my elbow, and at its prompting stepped forward with the captain. Janet recoiled a little at our approach, and then we three were standing before Charlie Hatch, listening.

He was looking at his wife with miserable intensity. His words rapped out metallically:

"John Mann died by gun shot—there at the hut—not long ago. Do you know more, Janet? Do you know more?"

Followed a moment when the woman seemed not to breathe. Under the lamp, her face was waxlike. Then she turned her head quickly and met the sharp scrutiny which the captain and I were bending upon her. She did not reply to her husband's stern questioning, but instead asked:

"Charlie, what do these two men mean to do now?" Then, with a swift step toward the captain and me, "I'll tell you what you're going to do! You're going to remember the great heart that was in the welcome my husband gave you! You're going to hold mercy before justice! You will keep silence! You will remember that John Mann was my husband's natural enemy! If you know the cause—if you know the cause——"

Here she lost control of herself utterly, or seemed so to do, and, turning, flung herself upon her husband, pressing him to her with a great show of tenderness and protection.

"Our love is greater than the law!" she panted. "Look at me, Charlie! If the world condemns you, still I shall not! Look at me! I'm the little fool who married you, and ruined you, brought you to this! Now I'm going to stand by you!"

As she drew away from him, Hatch stood there the picture of bewilderment. Then, hesitatingly, he broke the silence:

"I think—I think I must ask leave just now to be alone with my wife."

"Of course, of course," agreed the captain, with considerable relief. "There's nothing any of us can do, just now, but keep our heads. Shaughnessy has gone to notify the sheriff."

CHAPTER VIII.

From the broad porch where that afternoon I had met Shaughnessy, and which more recently had been the scene of his dramatic interview with Janet, a staircase led to the roof above. This upper platform was inclosed only by a parapet, and, furnished with a hammock cot, served as my open-air bedroom. A door through the main structure of the house opened into my study.

It was quite dark when I mounted the stairs, so abstracted that I gave little heed to immediate surroundings until I had passed on into the interior room and had dropped into a chair. I seemed to be sharing the very apprehension that must be disturbing the murderer, whoever he might be—and the possibility of its being Toy seemed negligible. Quite absurdly, I was moved by a panicky fear of being searched. I even drew the telltale lace handkerchief from my pocket and glanced about for a hiding place.

But here I had the sense to call myself a fool and, resolutely getting up, I tossed the bit of linen toward a desk. It fell, instead, to the floor, and I was reminded of the darkness of the room and oppressed by it. A few steps took me out again upon the porch roof, where I had relief in a look up the dark, quiet mountainside to the stars that were coming out above. My thoughts reverted to that first evening at the Hatchery, when I had stood in the sun parlor looking out at this same night-darkened sky and listening to the vibrant voice of Dorotea.

The silence was broken by a sob. I

turned and looked sharply about the platform. A moment later, I had crossed swiftly to my hammock cot and was standing over the pitiful, huddled form of a girl. It was Dorotea. She was lying on the cot, face downward, while her shoulders, under the filmy fabric of her waist, rose and fell convulsively.

She had entered my life with the glory of morning in her red-brown hair. She had held me with the warmer light in her eyes. Now it was night, and tragedy was in that night. I stooped and took her into my arms.

"No—no!" said Dorotea, but her hand moved softly to my face.

I took it in mine, pressed my lips to the cold little fingers, drew her closer, and kissed her lips. Her face was upturned, pale, and there was an expression upon it that I could not make out.

"You don't know why you came here," I told her, "but I do. It was the same power that brought me over the seas. There's a lot we don't understand to-night, but we know that we are here together, shall always be together. I will it."

"You must—not!" said Dorotea, but there was just a trace of a smile on her face.

"Do you love me?" I demanded.

A pause; then Dorotea impetuously threw her arms about my neck, drew my head to her. But a moment later, she had sprung away with a strange cry of misery. She spoke rapidly:

"You can't have me! I won't let you! I love you! Do you know who I am? I'm suffering! I'm death! You mustn't see me again! I'm going back to my father, to fear and to death! Don't follow!"

In my bewilderment, I was rooted to the spot while she backed away. She reached the stairway, and in a flash had disappeared. When I got hold of my wits and started in pursuit, it was too

late. I stumbled down the stairs, and on the porch below encountered Charlie Hatch, who had just stepped out of the house. He called my name. I was giving no heed when he repeated it with such unwonted sternness that I could not but pause.

"Which way did she go?" I demanded. "Did you see Dorotea?"

Hatch had come up and seized my arm.

"You are not seeking Dorotea," he declared, in a tone that was strangely even and devoid of stress. "You're going with me to find Captain Briggs. You will see that I do not falter. You two men will take my statement that it was I who ended the life of John Mann."

Now that I recall this scene and Hatch's astounding declaration, I feel a certain personal discomfiture. This man, whose nobility and sincerity in friendship were indisputable, had every claim upon my sympathy. Yet I do not believe that his avowal moved me to much surprise or pity or reprobation, or anything other than a swift relief. Yes, I must say that I cold-heartedly experienced a sudden relaxation of dread apprehension. Remember that I was in love with Dorotea and that she had behaved unaccountably.

Nevertheless, my hand found Hatch's and gripped it.

"It's done now. Bad business, Charlie. Wish I'd stuck closer to you. But I'm not going to see your future piled on the wreck of John Mann's own making."

"I have no future," said Hatch, in the same spiritless voice. "I tell you I want to find the captain."

Our search for Captain Briggs took us well over the house. Once we met Janet, but she stepped quickly into another room and closed the door. At last we found our man in the kitchen, leaning against a table and calmly sipping black coffee from a tin cup.

Hatch quickened his steps, and as he had done in my case, grasped the captain by the arm. The latter hastily set down the slopping cup and freed himself.

"Steady, steady!" he cautioned. "You'll do better to get something hot into you."

For some reason, Hatch seemed suddenly to falter in his purpose. His trembling hand rose to his forehead and moved back over his shock of gray hair. Then, after his instant of hesitation, he lifted his hand above his head as if taking an oath, and blurted out the statement he had made me on the porch.

"I am the one to suffer for this murder," he concluded, "and no court can make me add one word to what I have told you."

I had come to expect Captain Briggs to be undisturbed by any emergency, but now I noted the quick, hard clenching of his fists.

"If you ever try to convict yourself before a court, I'll see that your wife does some talking!" he rasped out.

"I tell you I know she is innocent!" was Hatch's almost shouted response.

"And right there you're lying for the second time in your life!" came back from the captain. "You think she killed John Mann, and you're trying to shoulder the crime to save her. Likely enough she thinks *you* killed him. She acted that way. Hatch, you're a fool! Can't you see how the case stands? It stands dead against the Chinaman."

The gruff words had a decided effect upon Hatch. His hard, strained look relaxed. His nerve deserted him.

"I had forgotten," he faltered. "I had forgotten—about Toy." His twitching face betrayed his breaking resolve.

Captain Briggs was quick to note the change. He strode squarely in front of Hatch and clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Am I looking at a murderer, a red-handed murderer?" he demanded.

Hatch met the old man's steady gaze in bewilderment for an instant; then he drew back in alarm.

"No, no!" he protested vehemently. "God help me; I thought—I saw my duty. But Toy—it must have been Toy."

"Exactly," said Captain Briggs. "And now we'll try some more of that coffee."

CHAPTER IX.

Whether or not the coffee exerted the magic influence, Charlie Hatch soon regained his free command of himself. Said he:

"I can't help thinking, gentlemen—it's a trite enough thing to say—but truly an ill wind blows good to some one. Now I might have lived long in your company and remained unaware how genuine is your friendship."

Genuine! The word struck a blow upon my conscience. For in my own mind an ill-faring sense of duty was pitted against certain primordial impulses. Candidly, my love ardor would have had all suspicion turned away from Dorotea, let it fall as it might at the feet of mere friends. So it is with considerable shame that I put down the lofty sentiment:

"We can't accept any credit. We've no purpose in any of this but to aid justice. The law can be depended upon if we assist it, which leaves us little to do but tell the truth."

"Spoken like a schoolboy," grunted the captain. "Once it nearly cost me my life on the gallows to unlearn that lesson you're expounding. I was tried for killing a man on the high seas. The right was all on my side. I had to do it or lose command of my ship."

"But later on a blessed court of land-lubbers came within an ace of calling it murder."

"Now you may as well understand

how I stand on this business. Whoever killed John Mann would find hard sledding on the road to justice. You may think my sympathies are misdirected, but what I propose, gentlemen, is that we do our own sleuth work, and maybe hold our own court in secret, and determine for ourselves where lies the guilt and the need of punishing."

He was watching Hatch's face keenly. And right then I thought I understood that he was not so sure of the latter's innocence as he had seemed to be when he had frustrated the abortive confession.

As for Hatch himself, the strained look of anxiety reappeared in his face.

"You mean," he faltered, "you mean you're not sure, after all, that Toy committed the murder?"

At this moment, a noise outside told of Shaughnessy's return. We hurried out of the house and met the car when it stopped. Shaughnessy had brought two men with him. One of them turned out to be a deputy sheriff and the other the physician from whose house the telephoning had been done.

During our brief introduction, I noted that Shaughnessy, the erstwhile blasé, sophisticated man of the world was manifestly ill at ease.

Characteristically, Captain Briggs summed up what we had to work upon.

"It might appear," he said, "that we should have kept closer watch of the Chinaman and so prevented his chance of escape, but the discovery of the murdered man naturally distracted our attention. As it was, Mr. Telfair and I attempted search in the brush, but we couldn't be positive in our suspicions until we'd made sure the fellow had not returned to the house."

Said the doctor: "The sheriff is providing for his apprehension. Messages are being phoned to surrounding towns and to San Francisco. Do you know the victim of the murder?" he added.

"Not personally," replied the cap-

tain, speaking in a nicely disinterested tone. "But Mr. Hatch recognized him as one John Mann, who formerly lived here."

If the doctor had learned this from Shaughnessy, he gave no sign, nor did he evince any surprise.

"A strange character," he observed. "I knew him well. I had understood that he was drowned at sea."

Here the deputy, Johnson, made his first sally into the conversation:

"Looks like some o' you folks oughta seen that guy loafin' around before he got himself killed. Who-all lives here, anyhow?"

"My wife and I," answered Hatch, quickly; and then, noting the young officer's shifting stare from the captain to me, "these gentlemen and Mr. Shaughnessy are guests from the city."

The deputy's gaze had settled upon me.

"What do you know of this business?"

I replied by relating how the Chinese cook had been missing at dinner time, how Captain Briggs and I had previously been mystified by Toy's surreptitious trips in the direction of the hermit's hut, how on this occasion we had determined to ascertain, if possible, what attracted him there, and how we had met him near the spot, coming away in a highly excited state. Then I added the circumstance of Toy's flight while we were inspecting the body.

"Never had no use for them heathen," the deputy avowed with a shake of his head, and then, with a weak laugh, "this John Mann oughta had more sense than to pick one o' them treacherous—— Say—who's that comin' on the run?"

We followed his look and saw the figure of a man hastily approaching. Hailed by the deputy, he halted uncertainly, and we recognized old Miguel, Mr. Rivas' Portuguese gardener.

At first the man was so excited and breathless that we could not make sense of his broken English. Then it appeared that he had been dispatched by Dorotea. Her father was very ill. A physician must be summoned at once. Happily, Doctor Winter was the one who had been in regular attendance upon the old man.

Miguel started back home, and we followed until we came to the bypath leading to the thicket. Here the doctor recalled his original purpose of inspecting Mann's body, and decided to turn thither with the deputy. Captain Briggs and I guided them, and for the first time I noted that neither Shaughnessy nor Hatch was in our company.

Nothing of importance occurred during the doctor's hasty examination of the body; at least, he made no remark. The deputy, with the aid of a pocket flash light, investigated the interior of the hut and shortly announced his intention of remaining there overnight. To him it appeared important that there should be no disturbing of possible clues; also, there should be no body snatching.

Once more Captain Briggs and I found ourselves alone when we returned to the main path, for the doctor left us to go to Mr. Rivas.

"Now," said the captain, as we started toward the Hatchery, "I've an opportunity of asking you about what concerns me more than anything else. What has happened to Dorotea?"

"The best that could happen under the circumstances," said I, expressing the relief I had felt ever since Miguel had delivered his message. "She's safe in her home, and if her father is as bad off as reported, no one will expect her to leave him. She'll hardly be called upon to attend the inquest."

Captain Briggs had lighted a fresh cigar and was puffing comfortably.

"Then, if the old man dies," he remarked, "Dorotea will be free to go

away somewhere, and that same place will in good time be your port of call, I suppose. Hatch will be ready, I guess, to go back to Canoeport, Indiana. Janet has always her career calling to her——"

"And Shaughnessy?" I put in. "You're not leaving Shaughnessy out of your optimistic forecast?"

The captain's reply began with a grunt, half-formed into an oath.

"I'd like to forget Shaughnessy's existence! That man is frightened to wolfishness. He hasn't forgotten we heard him make bloody resolves in the event of John Mann's reappearance. Likely enough he's some time or other given the same risky talk to others. You remember Janet's gibe about his making John Mann dead all over again? If I know him, and I think I do, he'll unshoulder suspicion at any cost. He wouldn't stop at incriminating his best friend."

"And whom do you call his best friend?"

"Lord knows! But if you ask me the one person who can make a fool and a tool of him, I'll give you the name of Janet Hatch."

We were nearing the house when our ears caught the sound of voices and the sliding of the door that closed the old carriage shed.

"Guess you omitted one of Shaughnessy's traits," I remarked. "He's conscientious before everything—doesn't intend to have that old car rusted by the dew."

"Humph!" grunted the captain. "Just you notice who's out there with him and do some more thinking." For by now we could see two people approaching. One was a woman. My companion added a few words in an undertone: "You tend to that, Telfair." With that he left me.

Just what required attending to was not immediately apparent, yet as I stood waiting for the approaching pair

I was filled with a sudden antagonism. I didn't like Shaughnessy, and I was quite certain that Janet didn't like me.

But I forgot that Janet's likes and dislikes were ever determined by the exigencies of the moment. Example was at hand. Quickening her pace, she hurried toward me, while her companion followed with no show of eagerness. Before he came up, she managed to give me a look and a significant gesture, which I could only take to mean that she desired me to free her from the man's company.

Shaughnessy was the first to speak. Ignoring me utterly, he caught Janet by the arm and said roughly:

"Come on!, I tell you I've got to have something to eat!"

I saw her draw back from him, and an innate masculine impulse of protection prompted me to give the man a curt suggestion.

"You don't have to be led to the kitchen."

Shaughnessy turned and looked me over as if my presence were a fresh discovery. I met his stare steadily, with immediate result.

"What the devil are you looking at?" he demanded.

"I could tell you better if I were a better judge of character. Don't expect me to absorb all the lessons of this night in an hour."

I intended no innuendo, but Shaughnessy took a step or two toward me with such signs of temper that I half lifted a guard. But he recovered himself, and assumed his usual supercilious air.

"So you're learning lessons, are you?" he sneered. "Maybe then, that ratiocinative mind of yours has penetrated further than ours. Maybe you can tell us who killed John Mann."

"I can't."

"Suppose, then, you get at it by elimination. Tell us who did *not* kill him.

"You ask too much," I said.

"Too much!" Shaughnessy exclaimed. "Is it too much to say that I, for one, am exempt from suspicion?"

"Too much," I answered firmly.

Here Janet broke in.

"Mr. Telfair is right," she said "And I'll tell you this, Tom Shaughnessy—if there's any guilt at my door, I'd rather it should be judged by a stanch and just and honest man than by a half-mad, self-centered ego-idolater!"

Shaughnessy laughed unpleasantly.

"You've done some thinking, haven't you, since you came to me on the porch, clinging, entreating?" he said. "It's occurred to you that the perspicacious Mr. Telfair will be subpoenaed at the inquest."

"Filth!" the woman exclaimed. "Man, you wade in it at every step!" For once her voice was hoarsely unfeminine.

Shaughnessy laughed and, abruptly turning away, started alone toward the house. With a wave of his hand, he called back to me:

"Don't forget, Telfair, to temper justice with mercy. Consider the fragility of the weaker vessel."

Without replying, I watched him depart.

My own mental habit is such that an influx of suggestions affects me to silence and abstraction until I have made due adjustment. During the moment that I remained on the spot, I was scarce conscious of another's company, and when I started to walk, it was somewhat aimlessly. But Janet's hand was on my arm. She guided my steps to the broad porch at the end of the house.

Not till we had arrived there did she speak. Then she gripped my arm nervously. I turned and faced her. Even in the shadow, her great black eyes were brilliant, and her face was deathly pale.

"Mr. Telfair," came her question, low-spoken, but sharp, "when you said

you could exempt no one from suspicion, did you mean to include Dorotea?"

I confess that I tried to push her from me, but she gripped me the harder.

"Listen!" Janet commanded. "I'm not the heartless woman you think I am. I've so much heart I've tried to forget one strange incident of this evening. I did forget it during the dreadful period when I suspected my husband. My heart went out to him. I almost forgot it when I suspected Tom Shaughnessy. I went to him out there, after you had left with the other men, and found him a frightened beast—nothing more. If one of those men *were* guilty, he would at least be a man. But Dorotea——"

I interrupted sharply:

"If you're involving Dorotea without cause, you're treading on dangerous ground! I love her."

Janet spoke on hurriedly, for there came the sound of some one moving within the house.

"Listen! When you and the captain went in search of Toy, you left Dorotea weeping and distracted by my side in the hall. That must have been soon after the murder was committed. Dorotea grew hysterical. Suddenly she laughed wildly and cried, 'I'm free! I'm free! Three years of bondage!' Mr. Telfair, it was just three years ago yesterday that she was married to John Mann."

"How dare you lie to me?" I demanded.

"How dare you say that you think I lie?" retorted Janet hotly.

Just then a door opened, and Captain Briggs stepped out upon the porch.

"Telfair," he suggested, "I've been thinking you ought to go over to the other house and inquire after Mr. Rivas' condition. Maybe Dorotea needs some help. It's been a hard night for her."

CHAPTER X.

What little sleep I had on the night following the murder came late. For hours I varied a troubled tossing on my hammock cot by springing up to pace the square of roof top. The demon of logic was insistent. Was it not probable that Dorotea had seen and recognized John Mann when, in terror she had called me from the hut? Was it not true that I had been struck by her strange, determined expression as we had left the thicket? Then there was her half-crazed behavior when I had encountered her at the house, breathless as if from running; later, the incident of the handkerchief. And if I were to credit Janet's story of Dorotea's hysterical utterance? Fiercely I tried to deny such belief by pronouncing Janet a merciless liar. Yet this very attempt at denunciation warned me of conscious bias.

No comfort came when I reviewed my experiences at the Rivas home, whither I had gone after my interview with Janet. I had found Charlie Hatch there before me, beginning a vigil at the bedside of Mr. Rivas and apparently relieved by the opportunity of service. Dr. Winter had not appeared at once, and then he had come from Dorotea's room. He had shaken his head at my request to see her, his serious, kindly gaze upon me.

"Not to-night," he had said. "Perhaps to-morrow." He had added, "I've talked with Dorotea. Come to me if ever you need counsel. I love the girl like a daughter. You have life before you. I am old. Suppose I say, and trust your understanding, that love is not love that endureth not in all things."

Such, then, was the mess of perplexities that littered my brain when I roused from unrestful dreams and found the morning sun shining in my face. Shortly afterward, I was down on the grounds before the house. As

yet I had seen no other member of the family, but presently I was accosted by Shaughnessy's voice close behind me.

"Didn't like to disturb you," he said, "but I've been very anxious to speak with you, Telfair. I want to tell you what needs no telling, I suppose. I made some rotten breaks, last evening. Must have been the drink I got at the doctor's."

Loss of sleep, coupled with worry, had left my nerves raw. My mood was not favorable to forgiveness, yet I could not help discerning in Shaughnessy's pale, haggard face the signs of much suffering.

"If you're referring to your excited attitude toward me," I answered, "it's a matter of no concern to me. I'm not minded to burden my thoughts with an unprofitable grudge. But now that you've brought the matter up, I'm going to ask you how you stand, this morning, on the innuendo you aimed at Janet. It's your plain duty to retract it unless you honestly think she had a hand in the murder."

Shaughnessy scraped his toe on the gravel walk, but his attitude hinted at genuine perplexity rather than at shamed discomfiture.

"I wish I'd held back that taunt," he said, "because I'm not the one to pass quick judgment or to influence opinion."

"Then you mean that Janet has done something that justifies suspicion?"

With a sign of weariness, Shaughnessy shrugged his shoulders. I noticed that he was fingering his cigarette case stiffly as if his hands were cold.

"Telfair," he began, "you and I haven't had much in common, since you came here, except interest in Dorotea. Don't interrupt; I'll say more of that presently. Right now the only way to clear up my seeming caddishness of last evening is to tell you something that occurred about an hour before you found Mann murdered.

"I had lost my cigarette case and had gone into the dining room to look on the sideboard. There I found Janet talking with Toy. She must have thought I had overheard what was said, for no sooner had he cut back into the kitchen than she came straight up to me, wearing on her face the queerest look of anger and dread.

"'Tom,' she said, 'I can't go to Charlie; you know that. Can I go to you? Is there a great, big reason why I can?'

"I knew she meant did I love her. I couldn't have said yes or no, to tell the truth, for if Janet is uncertain of heart, candidly, so am I.

"'Janet,' I said, 'be careful. Give us time to think.'

"'Time to think!' she exclaimed, and her fine control went to the winds. 'What time have we to think? We've got to act within an hour! John Mann has sent me word that I must come to the hut at once. If I go, I admit myself his slave. If I don't go before seven o'clock, he threatens to come here—to expose my folly of three years ago, to claim Dorotea, to work all the ruin in his power!'

"'But what can I do?' I asked.

"'Do! You can go instead of me to the hermit's hut! You could end all this! Do you understand what I mean? I say you could end it for all time!'

"Telfair, I was afraid of her. I knew what she could do with me. I knew what she *had* done with me. If she hadn't made me desperately in love with her, she had made me desperately certain I couldn't maintain the undivided love due Dorotea. Yes, that's what I meant a minute ago. It may yet be charged that I killed John Mann in order to preserve my claim upon Dorotea. I'm man enough, this morning, to tell you that I wouldn't have continued my suit in any case. I'm not the right man to marry her. I love too many women. I always have.

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"Of course I didn't think all that, in so many words, at the moment when Janet made her ambiguous demand. I was a good deal confused, to tell the truth.

"Janet," I said, "you were born to ruin men."

"She looked amazed and said only, 'You'll think better of that, Tom.'"

"Perhaps I shall," I answered her, "and now, if you'll excuse me a minute, I'm going out to do a little of the thinking." With that I left her. All I wanted was to get away."

Naturally I had striven to give Shaughnessy the closest attention. I say I had striven, because I could not altogether divert my mind from reflection upon his possible motives. My more generous idea was that his nature had been refined by a night's suffering; that, in a nature such as his, a lack of moral integrity might temporarily be filled by the artist's finer sensibilities. Temperament alone might have actuated his revolt from sordid meanness.

Shaughnessy had begun another sentence, in a tone even more serious, when he unexpectedly digressed.

"That's queer," he said. "Those people are giving us the go-by."

I, also, looked toward the road and saw a black touring car pursuing its course toward the Rivas home, where this branch of the road terminated. It was driven by a man who did not look like a chauffeur. Beside him was Dr. Winter. Another man and a woman were in the rear.

"Nothing very queer," I said. "Probably one of those men is the sheriff. The woman must be a nurse for Mr. Rivas. The doctor naturally surmises that Hatch is still at the bedside. No doubt the sheriff wishes first to interview the head of our house."

"That won't do—won't do at all!" Shaughnessy declared. "Hatch is precisely the wrong man, and I am precisely the right one. I've made up my

mind what to hand that sheriff. Good-by, old man," and he departed.

As matters now stood, I was more than ever in doubt. Besides, the fact that the sheriff, as I presumed him to be, had driven directly to the Rivas home aggravated my fears for Dorotea. This sense of failing courage reminded me of Captain Briggs. A glance at my watch led to the conjecture that he might be breakfasting in the kitchen. Accordingly I made my way thither.

But it was not Captain Briggs whom I found when I entered the kitchen and scented the coffee's comforting aroma. Instead, I met Janet Hatch. She had on a blue gingham apron, and her smile was not like any other I had ever seen on her face. It was nothing less than sisterly, and if it was not genuine, I had no yearning to plumb such depths of duplicity. I inquired whether she had seen the captain.

"I've just sent him to the hermit's hut with a breakfast for the officer. I hated to. He looks so old and worn, this morning. But Charlie is still at the Rivas', and you younger men were nowhere about." There was anxious inquiry in the glance that accompanied her last sentence.

"I've been talking with Shaughnessy," I explained. "He's changed since last night. He is—somewhat more communicative."

Janet was crossing the floor with the coffee pot. She paused for an instant, and her eyes fell. Then she came on and poured out my cup at a small table.

"I'm afraid it isn't hot," with a slight frown that broke once more into that endearing sisterly smile. "I wish you could have come earlier. But I think I know that you hadn't much sleep last night—nor had I. Perhaps that will make one bond of sympathy between us."

I had dropped into a chair and was breaking a roll. Something unaffected

and plaintive in the woman's tone reached me with softening effect.

"There's yet another bond," I said. "If we're not in just the same boat, I may extend the metaphor and say that our separate crafts are rocked by the same storm of passion. It is equally hard for us to steer a straight course."

A light of gratification shone quickly in Janet's face. She hesitated briefly, searching me with her eyes, and then dropped into a chair by my side. For once in her life, she seemed unconscious of her beauty. For that, I noted it the more. What matter that the morning light dealt unkindly with her pale cheeks and betrayed the lines about her tired, dark eyes? It was as if the imp of coquetry had deserted her, had left her to my mercy, with the reactive result that I then understood why clean-minded Charlie Hatch had loved this woman. Janet unadorned, in a gingham apron, had reached me with an appeal she could never have contrived.

"Mr. Telfair," she began, "if you had let me go on telling you, that first night after dinner here, when I overheard your mention of John Mann to Toy—"

"I acted like a prig," I interrupted. "But it isn't too late now, though it soon may be if I'm to help you. Honestly, I think I might better know more of your secrets than just misleading fragments."

"That's quite true," the woman agreed. "Suppose, then, I begin with the night I met you in the San Francisco restaurant."

"You can skip that," and briefly I spoke of my previous meeting with Mann in Honolulu and of my talk with Captain Briggs at the Bohemian Club.

A blush showed on Janet's face.

"No doubt," she said, "it was common talk that I was in John Mann's power about the time Charlie came on from Indiana. Tom hinted at it during the dinner, you remember. I could

have struck him! It made me think of my long experience of lies and deceits, and no other road to travel. Imagine, then, how I felt when I turned and saw Mann himself! I thought myself in a world of devils!

"But I must hurry. If I omit anything you want to know, ask me. John Mann knew Charlie's friend in Berkeley. He telephoned to him the next morning. He was asking where I could be reached. Charlie was there and came to the phone. He heard the voice of the man who had ruined him, though it uttered no word of self-revelment, and that's why my husband was plunged into a misery of uncertainty and apprehension which I learned of only yesterday, when he told me.

"In that way John Mann found out where I was stopping in the city. To get along, I met him that noon at a small restaurant. We had arranged it over the telephone. I could see no other way than, as you men say, 'to take the bull by the horns.'

"Mr. Telfair, I went to that meeting, filled with hate. Imagine my shame and confusion when I found my old infatuation was yet alive. Oh, I was no match for John Mann, face to face. Thank God he's dead!"

"No, no," I put in quickly. "Don't speak rashly. What really matters is what part that meeting played in Mann's designs."

"I'm not quite sure. I think he planned as he went along. He seemed then only to be justifying his marriage with Dorotea in the light of his declared love for me. He claimed the marriage had been unpremeditated and had been forced upon him by Mr. Rivas, who insanely thought that Mann had compromised his daughter. Then, to account for his immediate flight, he gave the reason that he could no longer remain without the right to love me—as if he had ever possessed that right while Charlie lived!

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"Yet the monster almost convinced me. I'm the vainest woman who ever lived. He made capital of that. He told me how, hopeless, he had gone down hill, had become a smuggler. Just before we left the restaurant, he admitted that his accomplices were under surveillance. Two of them already had been arrested. He himself had, the previous night, been warned to hide. He had risked his safety to meet me.

"Such flattery doesn't sound very subtle now. John Mann didn't need a straight story to assist him in convincing. He relied on his Mephistophelean art.

"But when I was alone again and on my way to the train, I felt sickened by fear. You couldn't understand what it means for a woman to be alone in that state. I wanted a man to help and advise me, a man who loved me. Naturally I couldn't go to my husband. But Shaughnessy—he had once been in love with me. When I saw him on the train, it all came to me in a flash. I was sure I could revive his infatuation."

Janet, at this point, seemed to sense reproof in my expression, although I doubt if it was so evident. She caught my hand and exclaimed:

"Don't condemn me! At least credit my candor."

"I do," said I, "and I think you may spare yourself that part of the tale. I know what you did to Shaughnessy. Tell me what was in the note that Toy handed you when he approached you on the station platform."

Janet looked her surprise at this bit of knowledge on my part.

"As well as I can remember—I destroyed the note—it read like this: 'Must get under cover. No safer place than my old haunt. Hire this cook. He will smuggle me food.' There isn't much need for me to go on. You've

been here, and I know that nothing much has escaped you."

On the contrary, I knew that a good deal had escaped me, but I saw the wisdom of allowing this overestimate of my shrewdness, for I feared reviving the woman's former trust in concealment. So, with feignedly casual prompting on my part, Janet touched more disconnectedly upon what had happened since.

"No," said she, "I didn't hear at once from John Mann. It was several days. I began to hope he had been frightened from the country. But Toy stayed on, and I missed things from the pantry.

"Then, one morning, Toy handed me another unsigned note. From its wording, one could see the Chinaman must have kept his fugitive master well informed. Mann wrote me he would leave the country if he could get money. He suggested that I 'touch my new flame.'

"I was too proud to question Toy, but I commissioned him to carry back some of my jewels. Of course that only betrayed my desperation.

"Next day came a note that was a demand, with suggestions as to how I was to work upon Shaughnessy. I must make him my slave, then tell him I was the victim of blackmail and induce him to deliver five thousand dollars. I didn't answer this note, but I fairly threw myself at Shaughnessy. I only wanted to gain time, thinking Toy would see my courting endeavors and encourage his employer to hold off. Oh, the misery!" She paused and seemed to be fighting back the tears.

Mann's note, she went on, which Hatch had found under her door, had been an ultimatum regarding the blackmail.

"And when I told Charlie you must have written that note," said Janet, "I was an animal at bay. I was in a thicket of deceptions. My heart was numb.

"Shortly afterward Shaughnessy

confronted me. You had told him. I confessed that John Mann was responsible, that he had threatened me, but I withheld the part that involved 'my new flame.' Charlie overheard us, and you know what followed."

I replied bluntly:

"Yes, I know that about five o'clock, or a little after, in the dining room, you asked Shaughnessy to meet Mann at the hut and 'end this for all time.'"

If Janet Hatch was startled, she was also a past master at concealment.

"I couldn't summon power to tell him all," she said. "I left it for Mann to mention the sum of money that would end it."

"And where did Shaughnessy go then?"

"I don't know. For the first time, I lapsed into apathy. I went to Charlie's room, intending to await his return and to tell him everything. I must have been there over an hour, brooding over things that had happened since our marriage. It began to grow dark. Fear spurred me to further action. I went out and found Shaughnessy on the porch. He was quietly smoking. I thought I saw love in his eyes when he turned to me.

"Then I blurted out about the money Mann demanded. I implored him to pay it. I clung to him and entreated him to save me. But Dorotea appeared. She ran around the house. Shaughnessy started to follow, but he must have seen you meet her. I entered the house and met you. There's no more to tell, Mr. Telfair."

"No," I replied, "unless you can tell who killed Mann."

Janet did not seem offended.

"I can't do more than tell you didn't kill him—I, for one, and Charlie—I don't think I need defend Charlie to you. As for Shaughnessy, I've told you how I found him quietly smoking on the porch, and I can't think that this would have been consistent with

his temperament if he'd just committed a murder. You remember how distracted by fear he seemed after the discovery."

Dorotea's name had not been mentioned in this, and it was with a sinking heart that I pledged my belief in Janet's story by pressing her hand.

CHAPTER XI.

I went up to my den and threw myself upon a couch. For a time my thoughts wandered in a random, impersonal way. Then I slept, and did not waken until after noon, when my eyes opened to see Captain Briggs in the doorway.

He nodded approval and remarked, "What we all need is more sleep and less worry." As he came on into the room, however, I recalled Janet's opinion. He did look old and worn.

Sitting up, I collected my thoughts and replied:

"I shouldn't have been sleeping, at all. I ought to have seen the sheriff."

"Don't think he missed you," comforted the captain.

"But," I questioned, "did he form any conclusion about the murder?"

"He did. He's a regular Sherlock Holmes, and the San Francisco detective who came with him is another. Say, what do you think? John Mann was an opium smuggler. The revenue men have been closing in on the gang, which was largely made up of Chinese. Seems Mann had been quarreling with his yellow pals. So one of them squealed on him and he skipped."

"Which means——"

"Exactly. They think this murder was somehow or other an afterclap to that thieves' row. Telfair, whoever killed John Mann has the favor of the gods. To be sure, there's the chance they may yet catch Toy, but I don't think that crafty Mongolian ever undertook his job here without providing

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against any emergency by planning a safe get-away. I remember he was pretty chummy with a Chinese vegetable vender from the village."

At first, despite my insistent misgivings, Captain Briggs' information awoke a hope of Toy's possible guilt, but my attempt to bring support to that idea resulted only in a vivid recollection of Dorotea's inexplicable behavior. This I could not ignore; it balked every sanguine turn of thought. Impatiently, I determined to find Dorotea and have her whole story at any cost.

Without inviting the captain to accompany me, I got up and left the room, tendering as an excuse only that I sought a bite of food in the kitchen. My hunger, however, was of another sort, and after descending the stairs and leaving the house with a fine show of indifference, I walked rapidly toward the Rivas home.

The night before, I had returned the lace handkerchief to my pocket. Now I considered a plan that seemed a bit brutal, but the surest way to results. Nearing the house, I met old Miguel, the gardener. He replied to my inquiry for Dorotea by pointing toward an arbor at a little distance on the grounds. Thither I turned my steps. The place was so beautiful, in its mantle of climbing roses, that my dread assumed a morbid complexion.

Entrance to the arbor was on the farther side. I took care not to appear there suddenly, but made a detour so that the girl could observe my approach. I saw her rise from a bench, take a step or two uncertainly, and then lift her hand in a gesture of fear. She looked but a slight young girl in her white summer frock.

Before going in, I hesitated. No word had been spoken. Dorotea had turned slightly from me, staring into the vines. Then, in a quavering voice, she asked:

"What is it? Why did you come?"

I answered, "There's one reason, Dorotea, why you must almost expect my coming. I came last night, but the doctor didn't wish me to see you."

"Oh, if I could make you understand! I shall go mad! Can't you see there's a curse on my life? I bring ruin to men! Why did you come?"

"I've given you one reason for my coming. There are plenty to give. Suppose I give another. I've come to return your handkerchief." The words all but choked me, but I held out the telltale bit of linen and lace.

For an instant Dorotea looked mystified. Then she moved quickly, snatched the handkerchief from me, crumpled it in nervous hands, lifted her eyes to meet mine, and with a great sob turned away and dropped upon a seat.

I was quickly beside her, but to my consternation I knew not what to say until she herself faltered:

"Where—did you find it?"

I answered, "It was lying within a few feet of John Mann's body."

It is not for me to say what my tone implied or how much of suffering it revealed. Even now I recall with shame that I half expected the girl to shrink in terror from the implication of my words. But she did not. She leaned slightly toward me and intently studied my face, while a new light, a softer light, came into her eyes. Whatever was born there appeared momentarily to have supplanted fear.

"You poor, poor boy!" said Dorotea. "You are suffering."

"Suffering! I wish that I myself had fired that shot! It would be a thousand times better than this. Can't you understand?"

To me it seemed a long time that I gazed into those burning brown eyes before at last Dorotea spoke.

"I suppose," she said, "I suppose you've come to make me tell you." And more quickly she added, "Then

you'll understand that I'm the most foolish girl who ever lived."

Followed her story:

"I never loved John Mann. I must have hated him from the beginning. But he was powerful; I feared him, and my father—some time I'll tell you. Always since the marriage, I've lived in terror of my husband's return—almost always. This year, Mr. Shaughnessy claimed to have proof that John Mann had been shipwrecked and drowned at sea. At first I believed him, and my relief was so great that I somehow connected him with the new joy."

"You loved him because he had cut your fetters?"

Dorotea shook her head.

"No. I didn't love him. I didn't then know what love was. He said he would teach me. I allowed him the opportunity. But I found he could not, and my old fear returned, in part. I mistrusted the story of the shipwreck. There was never an unhappier girl than I when first you met me. That seems such a long time ago."

I took a small hand in mine and held it.

"That much is not difficult to understand," said I, "but tell me this—did you see John Mann when you and I visited the hermit's hut?"

"Yes," answered the girl. "We know now that I did. But then—you've no idea what delusions I've suffered along with my life of constant dread. I've told you my fear of shadows. So often I seemed to see that man stalking toward me. When you were in the hut, I thought I had a glimpse of his face peering at me through the bushes. It was so real that I cried out, and you came, and—I realized your protection. I struggled to master what I thought was my silly fear. I brought all my determination to it when we were leaving."

"Yesterday afternoon, I wheeled father not far from the hermit's hut,

for I was determined to test my courage. I told him about the apparition in the thicket. He was shaken and ordered me to go nowhere alone.

"It must have been six o'clock when I had returned my father to our porch. I disobeyed him and was starting for the Hatchery when I missed the handkerchief. It's a pretty one and I value it. At first I thought I must have left it where I had sat upon the ground beside my father's chair.

"Oh, I feared to go there, and for that very reason I went. I didn't find the handkerchief. It was beginning to grow dark. The hut was not far away. I've tried to tell you how I'm sometimes impelled to go toward the thing that I most fear. Then, too, came the idea that I must have dropped the handkerchief when I was startled by that apparition in the thicket.

"At first I started slowly; then I ran toward the hut. My determination to overcome my fear mastered me, but it did not master the fear.

"It was so quiet in the thicket. For a moment I stood there almost forgetful of what had brought me; then I began looking here and there on the ground. I was doing this when I heard a man's voice. My heart froze!

"John Mann, in the flesh—there was no doubting reality now—had stepped out of the hut door. I shall never see anything more hateful than the sardonic smile upon his big face."

She paused suddenly, checked by a recollection, and a hot blush crept over her face.

"What did he say?" I prompted gently.

"I think," said the girl, "I think it was this: 'You're early, madam. Or perhaps your lover is late at the tryst.'"

"I only remember exclaiming, 'You're alive!'

"He answered with a sneer, 'Why not? I'm not the sort to die early.'

"The words stung me to fury.

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"No," I told him, "you're not the sort to die at all. You're not human; you're a fiend!"

"He replied, 'I'm your husband.' And, oh, the cruel satisfaction in his tone!

"Sometimes I had thought— Well, you'll understand that dreadful thought when I tell you my answer. I flung it at him:

"You'll be husband of a dead wife! I have still that means of release!"

"At that he started toward me. I remember his saying, 'I'll see that you don't do that! You're going to remain with me, this night, in the hut.'"

She stopped and shuddered violently. Her self-command forsook her. In vain I implored her to go on. She withdrew her hand from mine, covered her face, and repeated:

"I can't! You mustn't ask me! I can't!"

Although it seemed to me that I could not endure suspension of the tale at this point, I could not help seeing that I had to do with a woman on the brink of hysteria. Matters would have been made worse by my urging. Presently her sobbing ceased abruptly. She started to her feet and hurried out of the arbor. I followed and kept beside her until Charlie Hatch, coming from the Rivas house, gravely approached us.

"Dorotea," Hatch began—she had read something in his face and had hurried toward him—"your father has been released."

"My father is dead?"

I have no mastery of words to tell what was in the girl's tone. Hatch gave her his arm, and they left me.

CHAPTER XII.

Captain Briggs, collar and coat removed, was sitting on the edge of his bed. His hands were clasped between his stout knees, and his heavy shoulders

were bent. I had surprised him when he had thought himself alone, and the result was that I saw his face wearing an expression much graver than any I had ever seen there. For some reason, I stood at first without speaking.

—He looked at me keenly.

"What's up?" he asked. "Where have you been all the afternoon?"

I answered: "I've been talking with Dorotea. I've heard a story that would convince any court in the land that she murdered her husband."

"What the devil do you mean?" demanded the captain. "I thought you loved the girl."

"I do, but that fact wouldn't save her in the law. Listen." And then, as briefly as possible, I gave the story Dorotea had told me in the arbor, and added, "Not another thing would she tell me—nothing beyond the fact that John Mann had threatened to keep her in the hut, had started to seize her. She was unprotected——"

Interruption came with a quick gesture:

"You're wrong there. Dorotea *was* protected."

The last words were spoken sharply, but immediately a smile appeared upon my friend's face.

"You mean——"

"I mean a good deal, Telfair. If I'd dreamed that you were actually going to suspect Dorotea——"

Heedless of my impatience, he broke off and filled his pipe. Then he fell to pacing the floor slowly.

"My friend," he began, "you're going to think I haven't played quite fairly with you. All I ask is that you employ your imagination—try to put yourself in my place."

"Up till yesterday afternoon, I was holding no secrets from you concerning this matter. Just before dinner time, it occurred to me that Dorotea ought to be kept from coming over."

I nodded.

"Yes," the captain went on. "I know you had the same idea, and I gathered as much when I saw you on the path to her home. At first I followed you, and then concluded to trust your good sense. So it happened that I drew up near the path that leads back to the hut. I don't remember just how long I stood there, but I happened to recall our suspicions as to what had attracted Toy in the direction of the thicket. So you see in how incidental a manner fate directs a man's steps."

"I see," said I. "You heard then, what passed between Dorotea and John Mann."

"No. I was a little too late for that, but just before I reached the thicket, I heard voices and recognized one of them as Dorotea's. You can guess that I moved faster."

"But the shot—don't tell me you were too late to see who fired the shot!"

"That reminds me," said the captain, after a long draw at his pipe. "There's one little incident I've forgotten to tell you. Charlie Hatch had been behaving strangely for some time. The day had been hard on him. After he had dashed away on his pony, it occurred to me that there might be some danger of his committing suicide. I knew where he was accustomed to keep a revolver in a bookcase and went to his room to look for it."

"And it was gone," I interrupted. "I think I understand now—a little."

"It was *not* gone," came the quiet answer, "but I thought it wise to put the gun into my own pocket for safe-keeping."

"Now, Telfair, I've told my story to the point where Dorotea refused to give you more of hers. If she had gone on, she would have related how, as she started to flee from John Mann, she met me coming out of the thicket into the open space before the hut."

"I nearly collided with her, and she gaped out, 'Save me!' But her words

were not needed. I swung my arm to brush her behind me and I thought that she had fallen. Then I had her pursuer to deal with."

"That gun of Charlie's was out of my pocket, in my hand, pointed at John Mann. Perhaps my instinct intended nothing but bluff. I wasn't doing any real thinking. I was just what I've been so many times in my sea-faring life—a pretty good sort of animal, but a fighting animal with no promptings to give the road."

"Mann halted. I must confess that he managed it somehow without entire loss of dignity."

"'Good God!' said he, 'How many men does my wife meet in here of an evening?'"

"He said something else. I won't repeat it, but right then I had to hold my finger stiff on the trigger of that gun. There was a twitch in it."

"If I'm to make you understand what followed, I must say something of my mental state at that moment; probably, too, I shall make a mess of it. I never clearly comprehended your talk about the subconscious and the objective and all that. To me it seemed only a fancy theory. I've met a good many crises in my life, met them always in a simple, quick-reasoning way. But this time it was different. I was not thinking. I appeared not to be directing my own acts. I simply knew that this man, and I were natural antagonists. There could be no backing down on either side."

"Mann spoke again, disgustedly. It was plain he meant to ignore the threat of my weapon."

"'Well, seeing the girl is still my wife, I'll go get her and keep her for what she's worth.' And he started deliberately toward me."

"I don't know whether or not I uttered any warning. I can't say just what was in my mind. It sounds absurd, but I seemed to be in a sort of

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trance, hypnotic, perhaps. I saw this man like a great, powerful cat, creeping through life upon victim after victim. Then the pistol report startled me to a sudden recovery of my wits. The body had fallen near me.

"Still, something balked my realization as I stood there and watched the man die. I was a good deal dazed, yet I began to think of consequences. Could I call this self-defense? Had Mann possessed a weapon? This idea prompted me to stoop and feel in his hip pocket. What I found there was not a gun, but, instead, the lace handkerchief you have since returned to Dorotea.

"At the time it didn't occur to me that the little scrap of linen had any significance. As a matter of fact, it had none. I suppose Mann had been secretly watching Dorotea, in the afternoon, as she sat beside her father's wheel chair. Probably he passed the spot when she had gone, and for some reason, sentimental or cynical, picked up the handkerchief and put it in his pocket.

"So it was I who dropped the false clew you found, though I don't recall doing so. Telfair, the whole business is hard to explain."

"I don't see how," said I. "You've made it pretty plain."

"Except for one circumstance," the captain remarked, "a mighty singular one, you'll admit. In my excitement, I had stepped around a bit, and it suddenly occurred to me that I still held the revolver in my hand. The sight of it perplexed me. An idea was knocking at my brain. I opened the breach and dropped the cartridges into my palm. There were six chambers in the cylinder, and six loaded cartridges came out. Every one still had its bullet. Not one had been fired."

The captain's amazing revelation came so abruptly that my thoughts faltered at the task of readjustment.

Again I felt a sinking of heart as had been my case when Hatch had retracted his confession.

"But——" I began. "Good heavens, captain, you can't mean that Dorotea had fired the shot from behind you!"

"No," he answered curtly. "If the girl had been standing beside me, armed as I was, I should yet be just as certain she did not kill Mann. It would not be in her to do it. Still, you can pretty well understand why I've had to keep all this to myself. There were no witnesses, except the person who actually fired the shot."

"Toy," I suggested. "He must have been hidden in the thicket."

Captain Briggs laughed shortly.

"I think I know something of Chinese character. They're not a self-sacrificing people. On that account, I can't accept the theory that he aimed to protect Mann by killing me, and shot wild."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "perhaps the sheriff hit close to the truth, after all. Toy might have seen a chance to kill Mann and fix the blame upon you. Undoubtedly, whoever it was had that subterfuge in mind. Presumably you allowed Mann to approach so near that it appeared to an excited on-looker that you were not going to fire. He meant to take no chances on the opportunity being unimproved."

"But," the captain objected, "why should this Chinaman wish to kill John Mann?"

There was a knock at the door and Charlie Hatch entered. He appeared unaccountably embarrassed, yet there was more life than usual in his manner.

"I hardly know how to explain this," he said. "Perhaps I can do no better than show you this document. He handed the paper first to the captain. While the latter read, Hatch said to me:

"I've brought Dorotea to stay here. A lonely girl needs protection."

For me there was such portent in this bit of news that I was all but startled when the captain spoke my name.

"Telfair," said Captain Briggs, "I'll give you this in a nutshell. We've got the missing threads to our yarn.

"That old hermit plays a strong part. To begin with, John Mann egged Rivas on to his daily rows with the squatter—slipped a hint, I suppose to objectify the Spaniard's malignance.

"Rivas bungled, poisoned the hermit's wine cup, fled the hut without awaiting the finish. Mann had him then—was watching, no doubt—and gave the neighborly hint that a coroner might order an autopsy.

"This wouldn't do, at all. John Mann's own shady record wouldn't profit in a murder investigation. He did some investigating himself, along with Rivas. They went back to the hut, found the hermit wasn't dead—was alive enough to fix an accusing eye on them both. So the scenery was properly set for the coroner, and it was John Mann who kicked the cask from beneath the feet of the man who was hanged."

"What have you there?" I interrupted.

"I have the confession of Felix

Rivas, given to Mr. Hatch. It's his second confession. The first one was made to the priest just after Dorotea's marriage. John Mann had had a twist on Rivas, and he'd been quick to play the paralytic stroke into his hand, but he hadn't counted on the double function the priest could perform.

"That's why John Mann fled. His genius for suspicion let him into what was going on. Sanctity of the confessional didn't mean anything to a rascal who judged the whole world by his own faithless heart. To his mind, the murder was out.

"Rivas got better, a whole lot better than he let his daughter know. The best way to keep her in sight was to stick to his wheel chair. He feared John Mann, hated him, knew well enough now how he'd been played for his daughter."

Captain Briggs had paused to glance at the paper. Suddenly I understood it all. I started to my feet and exclaimed:

"Felix Rivas fired that shot from the thicket!"

"Exactly," said the captain. "But what's your hurry? Where are you going now?"

What came of the determination that took me forth Captain Briggs learned on a happier day. Dorotea told him.



THE DREAMER IN THE SUN

IF life be sleep, as sages say, let me snore long, wrapped warm in dream,
Nor waken to a greater day than this delightful sleep doth seem.

If I'm a shadow in a glass, God wot the glass pours golden stuff;
And while I watch fair shadows pass, this phantom play goes well enough.

Oh, count me not of restless men who pry into the secret womb
To know if they be born again! Unwitted let the darkness come.

CARLYLE F. MACINTYRE.



The Fighting Odds

By Leslie Burton Blades

Author of "Claire," etc.

As he sat huddled on the bench in the corner of the great room, Calvin listened with strained nerves for some familiar sound that might reassure him. Even the iron arm on the seat to which he clung seemed unsubstantial in the confused noise, and he could not see what was taking place, for he was blind.

As yet that lack of all vision meant nothing to the child save an utter loss of things in which to believe, for he had been without sight only a few months, and neither his ears nor his fingers had acquired the skill necessary to accurate knowledge of surroundings.

He was desolately alone there in the playroom of the school to which his parents had brought him, and his trembling lips found difficulty in maintaining the firmness his will demanded. About him deaf-and-dumb boys shuffled noisily, emitting odd, fearful sounds in their play. To him the confusion seemed terrible, and tears came stealing out between his tightly closed lids, to roll unheeded down his cheeks. He was homesick and his aching little heart would not cease its rhythmic pain.

A group of scuffling deaf-mutes swayed toward him and fell, with grunting, squealing tumultuousness, upon him. Fear gripped him in icy

chaos; then, with a desperation born of his nervous uncertainty, he shoved them from him violently, and struggled to his feet.

"Get out!" he muttered fiercely. "I'm not bothering you."

Quite unintentionally, the tumbling mutes knocked his feet from under him, and he fell, with a gasp of alarm. As he went down, his teeth set rigidly, and his fists doubled. Into his excited mind came his mother's soft, calm voice as he had heard it that morning when she had kissed him good-by.

"Remember, sonny," she had said, holding him very tight to her with a tenderness in which pain was apparent, "my boy doesn't let things get the best of him just because he can't see. Take things as they come and don't cry."

He did not attempt to strike at the boys who had upset him, and they scrambled away, careless of the panic they had caused. Again on the bench, he folded his hands resolutely and stifled the sob that would persist in making a baby of him.

He wanted to go home. He wanted his mother. He wanted escape from the terror of this unknown darkness out of which wriggling, kicking boys fell into his lap. But he knew that these things were impossible.

"There's a new blind kid." He heard this shouted above the din, and his heart leaped at the sound of coherent speech.

"Where is he?"

"In the corner by the radiator." He knew that boys who could talk were making toward him, and he tensed himself to meet them.

A pair of knees bumped against him, two pair of hands began feeling over him eagerly, and two excited voices exclaimed:

"What's your name?"

"Calvan," he answered, and shoved the examining hands away.

"Calvan what? You needn't be so proud." The speaker sat beside him and laid a rough little hand on his knee.

"My name is Calvan Stewart, and I'm not proud."

"Mine's Fisher, and the kids call me Fish." Again the inquisitive fingers began investigating. "How old are you?"

"Ten. What makes all the noise in here?"

"Aw, that's dummies. We blind kids don't mind them." Fisher spoke contemptuously.

"Are you blind?" There was a pathetic eagerness in Calvan voice, an agitated relief, such as a traveler in far places knows when a chance meeting brings him in touch with a fellow townsman.

"Sure, so's Sweed. He's our king."

"Who is he? What kind of a king?"

Calvan groped among the memories of his public-school days for a basis of understanding.

"Stand up and let's see how big you are." The command came from the other boy, who had first announced his arrival.

Calvan rose obediently, though he felt resentful, for he was not accustomed to such authoritative orders.

"I'm Sweed, and you got to call me king or get licked."

The speaker stood before Calvan, measuring his size with quick, informative fingers. Calvan thrust his hands away.

"I got to call nobody anything I don't want to," he stated.

"Want to fight now?" Sweed had a provoking tone of assurance that irritated Calvan deeply.

He did not answer the challenge, for instinct told him that he was at too great a disadvantage, but he knew also that the time must come when he could not evade the issue now raised.

"Well, why don't you answer? Are you 'fraid?"

"No," he said steadily. "I'm not, but I got to have time to learn how to fight without seein', don't I?"

The prolonged note of a steam whistle sounded, a bell clanged, and across the big room a man shouted:

"Line up! Supper!"

Fisher grasped Calvan's arm and ran across the room, dragging the uncertain, stumbling new boy after him.

Thus Calvan was introduced to the routine of his new life, and he resented it all. Nothing was familiar, nothing had any of the dear freedom of his home about it, and he felt his loneliness desperately.

"Put your hands on my shoulders and follow me," Fisher advised, when they were standing in line along the wall, and Calvan obeyed, with a sense of gratitude tempting tears to his eyes. It was something to feel friendly shoulders beneath one's palms.

The line moved forward jerkily. Calvan was half pulled off his feet, but recovered and hurried along behind Fisher, filled with a vast admiration at the certainty of his new friend's movements.

That first meal in the school dining room was an agony through which he lived by a seeming miracle.

During the blessing, which a teacher at the far end of the room delivered

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monotonously, the lad opposite Calvin kicked his shins viciously. Unable to resist the instinct for revenge, he kicked back. The boy had expected retaliation and had withdrawn his legs to one side of his chair, and Calvin's toe thumped the table, causing the silver to rattle. The lads around him snickered, a maid who waited on the children laid a reproving hand on Calvin's head, and in the humiliation that swept him, Calvin burst into silent tears.

He was careful not to cry aloud, for he knew that these boys would ridicule him as readily as would his old playmates at home.

At seven o'clock, he was put to bed in a dormitory with nine lads of his own age, and he lay awake long after the others slept, trying, with all his imaginative power, to understand his new life. Nothing was comprehensible, nothing clear, but among the shadowy vaguenesses he held fast to one thought.

"I will learn to be as sure as Fisher, and surer, too," he repeated over and over, while his fists clenched tight beneath the covers in his effort to suppress the empty, hungering cry for his mother that pride would not allow.

As the weeks passed, Calvin began to find himself among the blurred externalities that made up his world. His hands, trained daily by efficient teachers, acquired the fineness that enabled him to recognize objects at a touch and to discover relations of size, outline, and substance by examination. Still more pleasing to him was the discovery that his hearing had sharpened by practice until he was no longer confused by sounds, while his face grew accustomed to shadows, so that a strange new power began to serve him. He could tell when near any solid object, such as a tree, a building, or a post, by some intangible sensation awakened in the skin of his forehead and cheeks. He walked alone about the buildings,

and grew steadily more certain of his footing, while the vague dread of falling ceased to hold his muscles eternally tense.

Among his fellows he was rapidly gaining favor, though the antagonism aroused by his persistent refusal to call Sweed king grew until the inevitable battle for his right to freedom was no longer a mere thing of the indefinite future. He knew that he must fight this chieftain of schooldom, but he did not attempt to provoke the struggle. Not that he feared to try his skill at blind battle, for that fear, too, had vanished in the series of triumphs he had experienced in his development of hand and brain under his new fate, but he was not belligerent. He asked only to be allowed his own way of life, but that he asked with a silent persistence of conduct that was more aggravating to the boyish master of the dormitory than defiant speech could have been.

The inevitable test came one night in the bedroom after the matron had left the boys with an admonition to keep still and go to sleep.

The usual hum of conversation passing nightly between the occupants of the narrow beds had ceased, save for the heated argument concerning a story which Fisher and Calvin carried on in subdued whispers.

"You kids shut up and let me sleep." Sweed interrupted the talk with a gruff abruptness.

A moment of silence ensued. Then Calvin spoke.

"We don't have to," he said steadily.

"You do have to or I'll lick you right now."

It had come. Calvin felt his heart quicken, while his lips grew dry and hot.

"I guess you can try," he replied.

Again silence reigned in the room, broken only by Fisher's excited breathing. Then, with a dull thud, Sweed, who had slipped across the room,

brought his pillow down upon Calvin's head.

Without a word, he slipped out of bed and confronted the silent monarch of this dark little kingdom.

"Will you keep still?" Sweed waited.

"No." Calvin did not hesitate, and his fist struck the chest of his opponent as he spoke.

The sleepers awoke and sat up in bed, to whisper excited encouragement to the two pummeling lads, who stood barefooted, clad only in nightgowns, pounding at each other.

Calvan knew the law of this world of odd life, for he had been informed vigorously that a blind boy did not dodge.

"If a kid can't stand up and fight, he's a coward," was the way the law had been declared, and he meant to obey the rule.

The combatants had moved from between the beds to the center of the room, where they waged a determined war, all unmindful of the strangeness of their struggle.

Through the two open windows at the end of the room, a full moon shone upon the white-clad figures, who stood like stolid statues, save for their rapid breathing and the interminable rise and fall of determined fists.

Eight similarly white-clad figures sat along the walls in their narrow beds, gaining immense satisfaction from the fight—though their sole knowledge of it came through keen, tensed ears—and growing steadily louder in their excited support.

The sound swelled from a confused whisper, broken by dull thuds, to a chorus of boyish voices uttering glee-filled phrases.

A sharp click silenced the tumult instantly.

"Get to bed quick, Cal!" Fisher's advice sent Calvin scurrying for bed, while the information his ears gave him increased the speed with which he

scrambled beneath his covers. The matron had entered and, swooping upon Sweed with a hair brush, was administering just punishment for his disobedience. She could not resist a laugh as she saw Calvin's scurry for cover, and with a sharp threat should she be compelled to return, she left the room.

"You wait!" Sweed's threatening whisper reached Calvan through the now silent dormitory.

"I will." He snuggled down, holding his hand to a swollen lip, and fortified his soul against the morrow with exaltation at the discovery of his power. He was conquering blindness, beating down its limiting nothingness, and compared to that triumph, all else mattered little.

As he thought of his fearful, oppressive solitude that first day at school, only a few weeks earlier, his chest swelled with pride. Then, at its very limit of expansion, a sob suddenly caught the lad's lungs, for he remembered the day when he had stood with his mother outside the great doctor's office, still hearing the man's deep voice as it said:

"The boy will be hopelessly blind in a month, madam."

Even then those words had been freighted with terrific moment. Trying to grasp their full meaning, his imagination had pictured a dreadful black emptiness through which he must blunder endlessly, a pitied, helpless creature.

He had clung to his mother's hand, wondering why she was silent there by the unseen elevator door in the big building.

"Mamma," he had said timidly. "I won't cry if you won't. Anyhow, I can go to school and learn to be a real man, can't I?"

"Yes, son," her trembling voice had answered, and her hand had closed spasmodically over his, "you can, and we won't either of us cry, because my

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boy is a fighter, and he can conquer even blindness."

Her words had recalled a picture of Napoleon familiar to him, and his shoulders had squared unconsciously.

Now he was conquering blindness, and he should be happy, but why did he want to cry?

He wanted to write with his own hand telling his mother what he had learned, and he fell asleep resolved to try.

That letter in script, the first he had written since his accident, was a victory beyond the knowledge of other struggling mortals. He used a heavy pasteboard grooved at regular intervals to keep the lines straight, while he depended upon memory to shape the letters. He spent hours over it, his blond head bent above the sheet, his forehead wrinkled, and a stub pencil gripped hard in his hand:

DEAR MOTHER: I can walk alone from one building to another. I feed myself and make my own bed.

I had a fight with Sweed, and he didn't lick me.

I'm learning to feel things on my face without touching them, and I can use my fingers fine.

Since my explosion, I haven't been so happy, and I hope you are, too, because I am conquering blindness.

Lots of love to all,

CALVAN.

What that letter meant to his heart-heavy parents only a mother or a father can know. Tears shone in the blue depths of his mother's eyes, and his father turned away with a short laugh, while his face grew bright with pride in his son.

To Calvan, it was like the defiant blast of a trumpet sounded in victory before the dark tower of Childe Roland.

From that day on he made conscious effort to develop himself in every possible way. Often his attempts resulted foolishly, for he was a mere boy with only natural boy wisdom, but there was

a resolution in his struggle that brooked no defeat.

At twelve he stood at the front of his class, and save for the war with fists ever recurring between him and Sweed, he was acknowledged leader of his friends.

Spring had danced into radiant beauty, and the grounds of the school were a riot with perfumed sunlight that shimmered upon the broad velvet of lawns and crept into Calvan's heart through a myriad intangible ways.

About the edges of the flowerbeds, young stalks of promising green swayed gently in the cooling breezes that played down from the distant mountains, and the lilac trees bordering the street below the school fence flaunted clusters of white and purple beauty appreciated by those blind lads only through the heavy scent.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Calvan, with Sweed, was going down to the little store some few blocks beyond the school. Arm in arm, they strode along the walk, trusting to the alert evidence of their feet to assure their safety, while they talked of the coming summer, with its home-going joys.

They were fifteen now, and life was expanding rapidly. In a single day, their minds leaped an æon of development, leaving them amazed at the startling differences they found between the boy of now and the lad of yesterday. Easily the two most active of all those blind youths, these two carried on a strange companionship, in which personal rivalry gave way before joint ambition, only to revive at the least contradiction of purpose and result in another fight from which neither was able to emerge victor. Such relations sometimes exist between men in the world of affairs, but they are more frequent, more interestingly potential, among growing boys.

From her position on the terrace of

her front yard, Olga watched the boys approach with that wide-eyed interest she could never quite master.

Since the day, two years earlier, when she had first ventured shyly into a conversation with the blind boys, she had been unfailingly startled whenever she saw them coming carelessly along the street without even a cane to assist their feet. Perhaps that very wonder, so perpetually renewed, was the basis of the girl's admiration. Who can say what impulses prompt the half-frank, half-timid companionship of boy and girl in the early years of youth?

As the lads approached she sprang up and hastily gathered lilacs till her slender little hands were filled. Then, dark eyes dancing with pleasure, she slipped to the edge of the retaining wall which held the yard above the level of the walk, and waited. Her warm cheeks glowed with color, and the delicate half smile that curved the small red mouth was potential with promise of radiant womanhood.

The boys were beneath her now, and she leaned forward, shook out the blossoms, and accompanied the white and purple shower with a merry, rippling laugh.

"Olga, you little tease!" Calvin stopped and stooped to shake the tiny flowers from his hair, for he went without a hat in those days in order the better to detect things with that now finely developed tactual sense in his face. The mere shadow cast by a hat brim obscured the clarity otherwise attained.

"Don't you like lilacs?" Olga sat demurely kicking her heels against the stone wall.

"Do you want to go with us to the store?" Sweed asked.

"I guess so. Going to buy me something nice?"

"We'll do our best," Calvin answered, and the girl jumped down be-

side them, her black curls flying as she leaped.

Arm in arm, the three went laughing down the sun-splashed walk, the slight, dark girl looking almost faylike between the stalwart lads, with their shocked yellow hair blowing in the wind.

Perhaps the fourteen-year-old girl, still childlike in her freedom with the boys, was aware, too, that spring day, of the deeper antagonism steadily growing between them because of her. Who can know? Certainly she evinced no surprise when Calvin managed later to slip away with her, leaving Sweed to seek entertainment elsewhere.

"Sweed'll be mad," was all she said, "and you'll have to fight again."

"I know it. I don't care, though."

And he did not, for within him the resolution grew, and he determined once and for all to decide who should rightly claim this girl's companionship, and he did not ask whether her opinion mattered.

"Calvan"—she was watching his face intently—"could you whip him so he wouldn't try to come to see me any more?"

There is a strange faculty which the self-assertive blind develops. To those whose timidity serves as a chain, freedom is impossible, but to the brave, the unvanquished, comes not alone freedom, but a host of compensating aids in further conquest. Calvan was inherently a fighter, and his mother had encouraged him with untiring energy. Among other gifts his struggle had brought was an indefinable sense, a power almost as if his sight still operated behind the physical eyes, enabling him to feel the intent gaze of any one, and now, under Olga's eyes, his face flushed, while his heart quickened with a new exhilarating vitality.

"Would you like to have just me come, Olga?" He waited for her answer with an oddly palpitating heart.

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Her graceful little head nodded, and then, realizing that he could not see it, she emitted a faint vocal assent.

Olga's prophecy came true. Sweed did fight, and that last battle, in which age-old forces stimulated new courage, Calvin won. It was the last of his triumphs among the boys, for Sweed gave way before him, but other and far more difficult obstacles thrust ugly, solid surfaces across his life path.

He had begun to dream, vague, glorious visions of an easy stride out of his uncertain realm into a world of affairs where blindness mattered nothing, and he counted upon his family to help him, but events take no cognizance of any human planning, and at seventeen Calvin was left penniless, unfriended, to survive by his own might or be whelmed in the turbulent black through which he wandered.

The blow came unexpectedly. A railroad accident, a telegram, and the sympathetic voice of the school president shattered his faith in all things within a few crashing seconds. The tall, energetic youth whose hair fell bushily over his high forehead went out into a late evening with a faltering unsteady step.

"Olga!" he thought desperately. "I want to see her!" and he went down the broad walk under the first bright stars of night not eagerly erect, not with a certainty of stride, but with shoulders drooping and his hands out before him, as if the old fear had once more swept him out of faith, making his way desperate with unknown dangers.

She was in the high school, and her studies occupied her, but when she glanced up at the lad's drawn face, her book closed hastily and she dismissed the lessons with a little cry.

"Calvin, what is it?"

"I know you're busy, but—but—could you take a walk?"

"I'll get my coat," she said, and her hand patted his arm as she passed him.

In silence she took his hand, drew it through her arm, and led him down the avenue, while her eyes were misty with pain. They left the town and climbed a gentle slope, to wander across open prairie, where the grass gave up melodious fragrances under their feet and an occasional bird chirped a sleepy carol.

"It's all gone, Olga, everything. My God, where am I?" His free hand reached out as if to find some supporting substantial to which he might cling.

Sixteen, full of the courageous wisdom of young womanhood, she reached and took his big hand in her little one.

"What is it, Calvin? Tell me." Her voice was low and vibrant with the newborn beauty of awakened motherhood.

"They're dead—killed in a wreck," he blurted through trembling, uncontrolled lips. "And I—I am alone, and what can I do?"

She did not answer. Confronting his question with eyes which years of association with this blind lad had trained, she could find no adequate reply.

"I'm not able to do anything, Olga—nothing that would make me secure and—and"—his words broke from him with the wild agony of a man whose great idol is shattered—"the school hasn't equipped me to face life alone, blind!"

"I know," she half whispered. "I've wondered about that."

Solitary, grand in its isolation upon a prairie plateau near that school, stands one gigantic granite boulder which juts up in a rough gray mass, as if defiant of the level soil, the creeping prairie growth. To that old rock, whose seamy faces had withstood all storms, Olga led the broken, sobbing lad, and they sat in a niche while the girl tried to comfort him.

There was no embarrassing self-consciousness in her quick, sympathetic movement, which drew his head against

her shoulder, a protective arm circled about his shoulders; only a deep tenderness shone through the tears dimming her eyes.

"Calvan," her young voice murmured, "please, dearest boy, don't cry if you can help it. There must be a lot left in life yet if you just look for it."

"But I'm blind." His answer was not melodramatic sentiment. That cry was wrung from his very soul in a bitter moment of convicting sincerity. "Why pretend, Olga? We both know there is no way to beat emptiness if you can't fill it, and I can't!"

Her little white hand caressed his bowed head in silent reassurance, while she fought for self-mastery.

Around them the deep calm of starlit spring closed like a comforting mantle. A baby moon rose above the milky cloud bank on the horizon, and sent a silver beam to rest like a timid fairy of mercy upon the dark and the blond heads so close together.

The first rending escape of anguish passed, leaving him shaken and pensive beside her. He moistened burning lips, slipped an arm about the girl, and lifted his head with a faint, bitter smile touching his firm mouth as he spoke, and the indomitable pride of protecting young manhood sounded throb- bly in his voice.

"Olga, I mustn't keep you here mourning with me. You have other things to do, and we can't help matters any. Wouldn't we better go?"

She did not answer. Only the slightest movement drew her graceful young body nearer him as she sought, with the best gift life had awarded her, to console him.

"I want to be with you," she answered faintly, a vague, wondering timidity softening her tone. "I must be some help, Calvan."

"If only the school weren't failing me!" he said at last. "I've depended on my education, but now I see the

truth. It hasn't given my world light. Nothing has changed since the day I first entered its gate except that my body has grown. I've learned a lot of things, but they aren't valuable to the world. I couldn't sell my knowledge. I'm just trained to appreciate, aspire, and feel the keenness of denial. I want to be worth something."

There was a groping, reaching eagerness, a passionate fierceness in his last words that made the girl shrink with pain.

"I think you can," she whispered helplessly, though her face was alight with the faith that glorified her soul. "I know you can."

"How?" He dropped the question from lips that curled in self-scorn.

"By just making up your mind to." Her answer was the hope of all youth, the reasonless, unsupported, yet all-powerful faith that has fired all men to attain.

Youth is its own great dynamo whose vital force sweeps the material world with an unconquerable strength.

"I know that blindness is not bigger than a human soul."

Perhaps the thought so confidently spoken by that half child seems trite, a sentimentality deserving a cynical smile, but to Calvan it was the life-giving drink for which his despair-dry spirit yearned.

"Perhaps," he admitted. "But what can I do?"

It may be that the lad did not appreciate the girl's position, and that his aggressively repeated question was lacking in sympathetic understanding. Perhaps he had no right to confront her with that staggering insistence upon reality, but let those who have faced eternal nothingness unlighted, worse than black, say, for they alone can know the agony of soul that speaks again and again in that bitter cry.

The answer Olga made that night is the answer that must be made:

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"Fight, Calvin, fight the world as you used to fight with Sweed. You mustn't give up."

There was a long silence while they sat hand in hand, seeing nothing in their mutual blindness. At last Olga spoke again:

"Calvan, since I was a baby, I've kept a bank, and I've put pennies in it. There's nearly a hundred dollars now. Would you let me lend it to you?"

"What for?" His tone was monotonously heavy.

"You could buy a paper stand for the summer, and you might make enough money to carry you through school next winter."

"Oh, the county will have to send me to school."

"But you don't want that, Calvan."

"No, I don't!" He stood up suddenly, hands clenched in resistance at the very thought. "Who wants to be a charity victim or a county charge?"

"Then take the money," She leaned forward eagerly.

"I'm afraid to, Olga. I might never be able to pay it back."

"Calvan"—her voice lifted with a fine, sharp challenge in it—"I don't think I ever heard you say that before! I hope you will never, never admit cowardice again. I don't like you when you do."

All that summer, the boy stood in his little cart at the intersection of two busy streets, and his cheery smile, his quick, genial word, the ever-present show of confidence he wore brought busy men out of their way to buy the day's news at his stand.

Fall came, and he sold his place of business to return to school, with only enough money to carry him through. The money was the least of his valuables that fall, however, for the gracious girl whose dark eyes were alight with pride saw more than the material gain from his summer. To her, the new lift in his head, the assured poise

of his body, and the healthily sure ring of his deepened voice meant infinitely more.

"So you found out that blindness was not too big to climb over," she said, holding his hand while she studied his face.

"Yes, Olga, I did," he answered. "After you had boosted me beyond the highest point, I found it."

She laughed lightly, but her eyes grew tender as she led him to a chair and sat near, watching the alert expression of his face.

"Anyway, you're back at school, and that means most," she told him.

"It means something," he admitted, "though I'm not sure what. The school isn't teaching me what I'll have to know."

"It's giving you things you'll need later, though."

He did not argue the matter, for there were other things more engrossing just then, and she accepted his silence.

Graduation was at hand. Calvin, now a young man of twenty, was to receive his diploma from the school which had molded his youth, and he was eager to be freed from its walls. Not that he felt himself equal to life or ready to breast its rapid tide, but there was a certain straining ambition, a leaping, flashing dream which gave his thought light.

He wanted to get at the business of conquest. Men had taught him one great lesson during the past three years which he never forgot: The world of sighted men do not believe in the ability of the blind to master their handicap. Show them examples of such conquest, and they exclaim, "Remarkable!" while their inability to imagine themselves overcoming the visionless years leads them to deny the evidence so far that they doubt all other blind.

Again and again, Calvin had come

against the impenetrable wall of sentimental pity and unbelief which his unsuspecting fellowmen reared to balk his progress. He had been hardened by such experiences, hardened and made bitter, but the bitterness never showed, for deep in his heart he resolved to show these men about him that the limit of his possibilities was not reached in standing at the corner of a city street behind a bundle of daily papers. He meant to go into business, the commercial struggle of these men, and convince them there that his blindness was nothing, nothing, save in their own imagining.

It was gloriously valiant, the very ideal war that youth always plans, and his heart lifted toward the struggle buoyantly, for his dream was shared by the girl whose arm had circled his head the first time life's ruthless sweep had bent it low.

Faith in him was his strongest support, as the faith of a friend—a woman or a man—is the great bulwark of all humanity. Olga alone knew how much her steadfast belief had meant to the boy, and she gave unhesitatingly of her wealth of soul that he might not falter in whatever test should come.

It was all over at last, and, his diploma in his pocket, Calvin went with Olga to wander in intimate freedom across the prairie, where daisies and bluebells nodded bright little clustered blossoms in the breeze.

Olga was nineteen now, and the promise of her childhood was richly fulfilled in the slender young woman whose dark eyes had a deeper light in them, a steady, joyous glow which somehow bespoke the unswerving faith, the faint pain, and the great hope she felt for the stalwart young man who walked so easily beside her.

"So we've seen the end of school days," she said. "Calvan, it hasn't been so hard, and, after all, blindness doesn't matter."

"No," he answered, "it doesn't keep a man down, but it matters."

"Why, Calvan!" She looked quickly into his serious face. "What do you mean?"

He laughed shortly, his face maintaining the calm earnestness that gave him an appearance of soberness.

"I mean that day and night, Olga, every waking hour, I am set apart, alone in a more desolate sense than you know."

"But—but——" and her hand closed over his arm with that tenderness she had learned by experience to use in an effort to set aside the distance the inability to look into his eyes created, "I thought you were all over such thoughts."

"I know." He smiled. "It isn't bitterness. It isn't even dislike, certainly not fear, Olga. I'm merely stating a fact. I've seen it in other blind. I've come to accept it as the inevitable price I must pay for life. No seeing person can ever realize what it is. When you are alone and grow tired of thinking, you read or sew or do something else. When I am alone, I do nothing. What can one do? I don't mean that literally, but when I am too tired to work, too worn out to think, what is there for me? Nothing. The old, old word which has come to be the very heart of my life in solitude—nothing."

"I understand." Her voice trembled, and her eyes were misty. "You mustn't be alone."

"I'm afraid that is impossible."

He quickened his pace instinctively, and the girl was silent. Had he seen her eyes, he might have read their message of hope, but he did not see, and pride, the reserve no love can surmount in woman, kept her still.

"It isn't a complaint even," he continued thoughtfully. "It's a something actual that a blind man must learn to meet. Fortify one's self against it with every means possible and the problem

is simpler, yet even then the fact remains. Yes, if I were advising other blind, I should say that their ultimate test will come just there. Can a man endure empty solitude and keep himself courageous, defiant, alert and smiling?"

"You do, Calvin,"

"I do." He was wondering at the old, old heart that counted only twenty years of life within his breast. Thinking of the many hours when he had walked the floor in a savage struggle with stealthily smothering blackness, he could not believe that he was not old. Ages had passed in desperate thought, forced dreams, wild mental racing, all in the interminable war against the hollow infinity he felt between the four invisible walls of his own room.

"Calvan"—Olga's hand closed more firmly on his arm—"please think out loud. I want to share this evening with you."

"All right." He laughed gayly, and his face lost its rigidity. "I'm plotting against the man I mean to ask for a job."

"I know he won't refuse." Once more she rallied to the position she felt to be hers by right. He must be supported.

"I can't feel so sure, but I'll give him a hard time of it when he tries."

They laughed together and gave up their thought to mere playing with the future, while the vast forces that moved between them in undefinable yearnings, hopes, and dreams, swelled steadily nearer the irresistible surface of their lives.

"You'll see him to-morrow, then?"

"Yes," he answered, as they paused before her home, "to-morrow. And after that"—his shoulders squared—"I'll begin work, and I'll succeed, despite the stupid unbelief of the men with whom I shall have to deal."

"I'll want to know right away."

"You shall, and good night."

He left her with a smile, and she

watched him going swiftly, sure of himself in every trained muscle, while her eyes clouded with a wistful, luminous pain.

That first interview with Mr. Harvy Calvin never forgot. The great head of the Harvy Shoe Manufactory was a man of solid business training, and years of commercial life had made him as unemotionally indifferent to the weak as they had surrounded him physically with outer offices, clerks, and stenographers who made undesirable access to his private room impossible.

In the first of these offices, Calvin stood with his hat and cane in one hand, while the other, unable to conceal his nervousness, fingered the few coins in his pocket restlessly.

"Mr. Harvy says it will be impossible for him to see you." The curt stenographer turned away from Calvin with a skilled manner of dismissal.

"Go and tell Mr. Harvy that I am not seeking to extract money from him for myself or for any other charitable purpose. I am here to help him make it. Say that, please."

He knew that his attempt was unparalleled in effrontery, but he waited unabashed, for he had learned, too, that a blind man dares not be merely ordinarily sure—he must be bold.

"Come this way, please."

He followed the girl, every nerve alert to detect the obstacles in his way, ears strained to catch the sound of her feet, that he might keep as nearly behind her as possible.

It was a perilous journey through that long series of desks, for he knew that every minor defect in his personal appearance would be magnified endlessly when it was discovered that he was blind.

"Well, young man"—Mr. Harvy turned abruptly as the girl who had ushered Calvin in closed the door behind him—"what is it you do want? Be brief, please."

"Very well." Calvin smiled confidently. "I want a position as traveling salesman. I can sell your goods, and I want the opportunity."

"I suppose you have had experience." There was a poorly concealed irony in the man's voice.

"I've sold goods to more types of people than your business will require me to meet—yes, sir."

"Can you see at all?"

"I can not."

"Yet you expect to travel, meet men who are busy, show them my shoe, and do well."

"Precisely."

"You are an assured young man. Just how will you do it?"

"By the usual means—an application of intelligence plus a certain spectacular advantage my blindness thrusts upon me."

"Hum. I'll send you to the head salesman."

"Mr. Harvy, he will say there is no opening, because he won't believe I can do the work. You have imagination. Why not give me a chance? I won't complain about dismissal if I fail. Indeed, I won't even wait to be discharged."

There was a moment of silence, and Calvin heard the door open. His face grew crimson and his teeth set, for he believed he had failed, and the thought hurt deeply.

"Take this young man— What did you say your name was?"

"Calvan Stewart."

"Take Mr. Stewart to Holmes and tell him I sent him. Give him this."

Without a word, Calvin left the office. The manufacturer had already turned back to his desk.

That there would be difficulties, hard to overcome, Calvin knew, but not until he was out on his first trip for the Harvy Shoe Company did he fully realize how many there were.

He had planned with careful atten-

tion to detail, thinking of everything possible, but there were still many unexpected things which had to be momentarily overcome. Trains were simple, and he found little trouble going through strange towns. A tip to a porter, a Western Union boy well paid, and he gained information which made these things easy.

People wondered at his daring as he passed alone through unfamiliar streets, and there were times when he was tempted to laugh at their comments. If they would only realize that sidewalks are made for pedestrians and therefore safe, he used to think, but they never seemed to comprehend that fact.

Writing home to Olga on one occasion, he said:

"With buildings on one side over which I couldn't climb, a curb on the other off which I have too much sense to step, it should seem simple. I find every one most charming about helping me across streets. I sometimes find them offering help when it isn't necessary, but altogether they are mighty fine.

"As to business, I am amused at the men who first act as if I were a swindler, second as if I were a genius, and third order my goods bounteously. Harvy will be pleased, I know."

Of the long, long, empty evenings which he spent alone, the fear that crept again and again out of his blackness to chill him, of the desperate hunger for diversion, he never spoke. No one knew that the confident, capable man who met them with a smile dealt with them cheerfully, and left them admiring, was very often struggling against an oppressive darkness.

Very early Calvin discovered a method by which he could turn his handicap into a rather dramatic advantage. At first he resented what seemed to him trading upon his blindness, but that feeling, too, vanished before the

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persistent force of his reason, and he came to realize that a man uses whatever fate has given him without superfluous ideas about the right or wrong therein.

He had found that business men often refused to see him, merely because they felt that a blind man could not talk to them intelligently, or because they cared nothing for his supposed appeal. To them his position seemed a piece of absurd charity on the part of the firm.

It was not easy to beat down such a barrier, for men's preconceived ideas are the most solid of obstacles, but he kept up his courage and eventually he won. It came about through his keenly developed sense of touch, which he discovered, made a marked appeal to the imaginations of those with whom he talked.

He would announce himself as salesman for Harvy shoes and, without allowing his listener time for a word, would hold out a shoe saying:

"Did you ever think to test a shoe by touch? It is an absolutely sure method, because you can detect a coarseness of grain or a flaw which the eye would miss. Here is a shoe, for instance, which, if you will feel just where my finger is, you will find has——" And from that point on, his talk would be a direct, clear, and successful advance toward a sale.

At first the men who listened were only interested. Then, finding that he had actually opened up a new avenue of experience, they would try his system, and after the first sale, all was easy. He could go back to that man with certainty, for he had proven him a value to the purchaser as well as to the manufacturer.

For two years, Calvin Stewart covered his territory, and his business grew until he was called, "one of our crack salesmen" by the big firm, and he had saved money.

Now, as he turned homeward after a long trip, that thought gave him the most pleasure, for he was going home to make the last great test of his victory over the dark. By it, he thought, he would know the degree to which he had succeeded, for thus far he counted his success as only partly true.

During those two years, he had learned one more great lesson, too, for he knew how to reduce the solitude to a minimum so small that only rarely did the old hungering pain come upon him.

He was not a tawdry sunshine optimist. Many of his experiences had made him even less than normally so, yet he knew the value of hope, he knew the power of belief in himself, and he could rout the worst attack of black despair with an aggressive turn of his mind toward the to-morrows.

"I have done this," he would say, "and that I mean to do."

For any man who wages war against a handicap there exists one mighty ally—the power to do. No matter what, no matter how lowly the task may be, do it, for in it, as Calvin said, "comes the courage to do more. One dares not be idle. That is death."

She was waiting for him at the steps, his telegram in her hand.

"I could hardly wait till you came, Calvin. What is the good news?"

"Did I say it was good?" He paused before her, smiling.

"No, but you said you had something to tell me. It must be good."

Again it was spring, and beside her a great lilac tree showered its rich perfume through the soft, still night. A gentle wind blew coolingly down from the distant Rockies, and the great oak on her lawn, beneath which they had played as children, rustled musically.

"It is that I love you, Olga." He held out his arms, while he was swept with a sudden realization that in her answer lay the possible death to his empty solitude.

"I thought——" She faltered timidly; then, with a little laugh, she flung herself into his arms, her own slipped about his neck. "I thought you would never say it, Calvin!"

"I almost never did. I was afraid."

"Calvan, not—not because you are blind?"

He nodded and drew her close.

"Oh, Calvan, you dear, dear, foolish boy!" and her lips met his with an infinite power to steal away such fears.

"I want to be sure of everything now, Olga. Let's go in and tell your parents," and he stood erectly proud, wondering what they would say.

"All right," she answered with simple faith. "Come on."

Her parents listened in silence while the young people stood before them hand in hand, and Calvan told of his love.

"I've made good. I've saved over sixteen hundred dollars and I'm not afraid of life. I want her for my wife," he ended, and waited in tense expectancy.

There was a long silence before her father spoke. He was a genial, kindly man whose success had not deadened the imaginative warmth that had characterized his youth. His gray eyes were dim now as he spoke.

"Calvan," he said slowly, "we've known this would come some day, and we've thought a good deal about it. You want me to be frank, you say. I mean to be, brutally frank, and I hate to do it. You are a blind man."

"Father!" Olga started forward, but Calvan's hand closed firmly over hers as he said:

"Wait, Olga, I want to hear it all."

"You have made good," the old man continued, "and we're all proud of you. We admire you greatly. But to give you our daughter's happiness is another thing. You must inevitably be dependent upon her in many ways that will be unpleasant for both of you. You can

never meet her on that equal footing of eye-to-eye life so necessary. I am afraid, as is her mother, boy, and we're sorry—sorrer than you know."

Calvan did not attempt to answer at once, for the secret doubt, the last bitter hidden remnant of unbelief in his blind self, had leaped into vigor, and his love for Olga gave it strength.

"But I want to marry him," Olga broke the silence.

"I know, dear," her mother said, "but you are too young to know."

The great love of a strong man for a woman is often the fuel that feeds his own worst weakness. So it was now with Calvan. All his soul hungered for Olga's happiness, cost that what it might, and as he thought in fierce, swift images of her life with him, he grew fearful, afraid of himself, of his darkness, and there came again the old, resistless fear of the emptiness.

"Perhaps they're right, Olga," he faltered. "I'm afraid they are."

"Calvan, are you going to fail now? Is your whole life going to sink now because of me, after all these years I have helped you? Oh, Calvan, it isn't right!"

He shook his head sadly.

"Perhaps not, Olga, but I can't be sure, after all, that I can be what a husband should."

"Then why did you speak at all?" Her cry came from her deepest anguish, and the tones of her voice were a-quiver. To his sensitive ears, the pain of them sounded chaotic, tearing, as if he heard her soul rent asunder.

"My God, because the love I have would no longer be still!" he cried. "I tried to silence it, but blindness doesn't murder my manhood. I want my love!"

"And you shall have her!" Olga's answer was swift, and she threw her arms about him, heedless of her mother's protest.

"I'm tired of this foolishness about

your dependence!" she went on. "All his life father has depended upon you, mother, and he has his eyes. It's always you who must look after his clothes, listen to his business troubles, comfort his worries, and soothe his pains. You read to him, you take care of him. What more can Calvin demand? It's no more than any woman's right to care for the man she loves, and Calvin can give me a home. All that any man can buy a woman, he can buy."

"I—I——" Calvin choked and held her tight, despite his will. The virile young life within him, fired with love, would not be stilled.

"I'm so tired of these superstitions, these foolish, sorrow-making nonsenses we sighted people thrust upon the men who already fight great odds! I won't have it done to Calvin!"

She was sobbing on his shoulder.

Her father stood irresolute, looking toward his wife for some indication, some impulse toward action.

"She is right. Let them be," his wife said softly, and the old man smiled as he took Calvin's hand.

"I guess she's right, boy," he said. "She's about stated the case of all men. I wish you both joy."

They sat together upon the steps, talking in happy whispers, while her head nestled against his shoulder.

"You see," she said softly, her eyes upon his face with a tender glory flooding them, "I told you there was nothing to fear."

"No," he agreed, and a great wonder filled him, for his soul felt bathed in light, "there is nothing, Olga, so long as a man has courage to do and a woman who gives him strength."

"Flatterer," she said happily. "I didn't give you that strength. It was that strength that won me."

"And so long as a man fights the odds against him, he has nothing, nothing to fear," he said again, as if he had just discovered the light that could shatter all night.



INLAND

PEOPLE that build their houses inland,
People that buy a plot of ground
Shaped like a house and build a house there,
Far from the seaboard, far from the sound

Of water sucking the hollow ledges,
Tons of water striking the shore,
What do they long for, as I long for
One salt smell of the sea once more?

People the waves have not awakened,
Spanking the boats at the harbor's head,
What do they long for, as I long for—
Starting up in my inland bed,

Beating the narrow walls and finding
Neither a window nor a door,
Screaming to God for death by drowning!—
One salt taste of the sea once more?

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.



The Way the Wind Blows

By May Edginton

Author of "The Woman Who Broke the Rule,"
"The Price of Wings," etc.

CHAPTER I.

ALL well over," thought Loftus. "All this stress and strain you read about incessantly and saw on people's faces, all this mourning and trumpeting, all this madness of women—over. Nicely over. Peace—just round the corner."

He strolled slowly toward the window of the club smoking room, cigar in mouth, hands in pockets, his roving glance caught by the crowns of two women's heads in uniform caps flitting by on the pavement outside.

He had lunched well, was not unkindly disposed toward man or beast, woman or child. His vision was rosy, his mind of an easy amplitude. He stared reflectively after the uniform caps.

"Get those off," he thought, "get those off, and women'll be women, just the same."

A man he knew came and stood near him, and Loftus turned, and they spoke.

"I want to put all women's uniforms on the scrap heap," said Loftus, still looking after the two young women. "I want to see women fluffy again."

Following the direction of Loftus' eyes, the other replied:

"I haven't noticed a fundamental difference myself. Those two—they're probably off duty for the rest of the

day. They're meeting two boys, and they're going to dance."

"Sure I hope so," said Loftus. "Sure I hope so. That sort of thing—it's what women are for." He mused in a sleek fashion, adding, "My own girl comes home to-day."

"Ah—your daughter?"

"Yes," said Loftus. "She's been in France four years now—short spells of leave only. I'm meeting her at Victoria at four-thirty."

He stood gazing out into Piccadilly. Sun shone. Trees were budding green.

"It's a good, fat, easy old world again," he thought.

Not that he had done so badly during the red and splendid years in which thousands of heroes had gone shining out into many lands to die in one cause—for he had made money, a great deal of money.

He smiled.

"I'll telephone to Cox," he thought.

He did his telephoning in leisurely fashion.

"Hello, Wyngate," he said, when he had got through to another club. "This is Loftus. She comes home at four-thirty. I had the wire this morning. You'll dine to-night, of course? Eight, if it suits you, my boy. Goo'-by."

He smiled again. The sudden sharpening in young Cox's voice! The jubi-

lation! The terse little message had shaken him out of his lordliness, his languors, and his stiff "form." Loftus put back the receiver, thinking:

"It'll be a topping good match. He's next to Earlsam, and Earlsam's delicate, and their father can't last long. Rosa'll be Countess of Ladbroke before the bloom's off her. I wonder if she knows all that's possible to her? Girls don't. To be young, good-looking, and future Countess of Ladbroke—what a hand to hold! But—women miss half the fun of life. They don't know—that's just it. They ab-so-lutely *don't know*."

He got brushed down by a servant and asked for his car. It was ranked outside in a line of taxicabs. Another servant went out to the club steps and signed for it. It rolled quietly to the curb—a beautiful car, body line, paint-work, silver-colored fittings, dove-gray upholstery, all a perfect plan; the best car on the market as far as price is a criterion. Cyril Loftus was helped into his overcoat, gave the order, "Victoria Station."

He noticed rather keenly the green park as he drove by. It looked so exuberantly in leaf and bud—emblematic of a new birth of all things, a world advent. Rosa loved to see the London parks adorned for summer, he remembered. The slightest touch of sentimentality softened his eye as he thought of his girl. Exercising her dogs in the mornings, she had used to stroll by the flower-beds in Hyde Park and St. James' Park, watching the gardeners at work and talking to them: "Geraniums and roses this year? And—and pelargoniums? Those borders are a joy!" And they had been a joy to her. She loved beauty and color. What a pretty thing she was herself. All that had been before the holocaust, before she had given up—well, all that she had given up, and instead of toying with life as she might have done quite credit-

ably to herself even in war time—salving her soul by a little canteen work, perhaps, between dances—had linked herself up with the great, grim chain of fighting men and women who had gone to the corners of the earth—had ceased toying with life and let it take hold of her.

What had it done to her? She had been only twenty then. She might have got hoydenish, as some of the khaki girls did, or careless and prosaic about men, or indifferent to her clothes. A calamity! But Loftus rather thought not. No, he scarcely feared it. Flesh of his flesh, certain elements were bred in her. There had been her mother, too, a pretty woman, *intrigante* to her finger tips. She had made him mad, and many other men, right up to her death in her thirties, at the very top of her teasing charm and power.

"No," thought Loftus, "Rosa will be all right."

He was on the platform when the leave train came in. Crowds of soldiers home for good, crowds of soldiers home for brief weeks, streams of khaki women—at last Rosa. She was standing by him almost before he realized her, a middle-sized girl, made so beautifully that her mere figure struck and held the eye before the beholder reached her face. And her face, fair, vivid, eager, with adorable teeth and eyes, the sleek black hair showing in a tiny ripple or two under the uniform cap—it might have been her mother's at her zenith.

She clung to Loftus' arm. There were eager tears in her eyes and a laugh on her lips.

"Father!" Her breath caught. She hadn't hardened, then—she was emotional, just as girls should be.

"My dear girl!" he answered, squeezing her hands. "Let's get the bustle over. Where's your—"

"My kit is—oh, somewhere!"

He laughed. Not too capable, thank

Heaven! Still able to lose her luggage and want a man to hunt it out! He beckoned to the porter he had annexed, who stood at his elbow, ready and servile with a big tip in sight, though poorer and wearier folks went unattended.

"This lady's baggage— Describe it, my dear, and we'll wait in the car, comfortably."

Holding her arm, he walked her out of the station. They sat side by side in the car, waiting for her things. She looked around her with absorbed interest at the incessant traffic in the station yard. Without, in the familiar streets, people came and went on small businesses. Flower venders carried patches of beautiful color. The sky was blue.

"Good to be home?" said Loftus.

The smile died on her lips.

"Very good, father."

"Here's your baggage, dear. Is that all?"

The rough stuff—rough compared with peace-time woman's boxes and bags—was put on the car, the porter was paid, they were away.

"How's every one?" asked the girl.

"Servants, dear? All right. Changes, of course. Cox you'll see to-night. He'll dine. I thought—" He smiled slyly. "The duchess is very keen about your coming home. I met her at an in-aid-of show yesterday," he added.

The girl settled back on the cushions without a word. Loftus did not look at her for a while, although he was meaning to look. He guessed she was blushing. In a moment or two he glanced around, and yes, she was! She looked the most charming and desirable thing, with her face pink as a rose. His heart fluttered a little. He had not known it could feel so warm. He was proud of her.

"I've missed you, Rosa," he said, believing it, and he laid his own soft,

well-cared-for hand over her ungloved one in her lap.

His own hand was softer than hers. He picked it up and examined it.

"Your manicurist has a job here, my dear!"

"Yes. I'm rather—unkempt, perhaps."

"I thought you had what amounts to—I don't understand how superiority is counted in the Women's Army—but I thought you had a sorter commissioned job out there lately, nothing rough or menial."

"Yes. Yes, I've had a good, big job. It was fine! But as for my hands, it's just that, out there, one forgets—"

He noted a look on her face that he did not know.

"You'll soon be in full fighting trim again."

"Fighting trim? Why—" She indicated her battered khaki.

"Oh, that! My dear!" He hid his smile with a hand passed over his lips and chin. "I don't call that a woman's fighting trim at all."

She considered him rather gravely, but before she was ready with a reply, they were home.

"You'll find all your things ready, dear, I think," said Loftus, as he ushered her in. "You'd like to go straight upstairs—rest a bit? 'I'll send tea up.' And he stood a moment in the hall, twirling his little gray mustache, watching her as she mounted the stairs. She had an agile step and a perfectly turned ankle which even that damned khaki stocking could not spoil, he observed.

As if she knew he was watching, she turned at the top, looked down, and waved to him.

"The dear, gay, pretty thing! What a season she'll have! Home just in time," he said to himself, twisting his mustache.

She disappeared into her bedroom, shut a white-painted door.

Inside the room, she stood a moment, poised, considering, a little lost. The room was familiar and yet unfamiliarly beautiful. She had lost touch with it. Soon she walked about examining things. The room had been repainted, redecorated throughout, though still in her favorite scheme—white and soft purple. It looked radiantly fresh and incalculably expensive. There was a scent in the air, very sweet and a trifle musky. It came from two purple bowls full of pink malmaisons. She breathed it in troublously and sat down on a cushioned ottoman. The windows were open to a soft afternoon, and London birds twittered carelessly in the tree-tops of the gardens outside.

A maid brought in a tea tray and asked if she could help. Her face was new to Rosa.

"I've been engaged partly for you, miss," the girl added.

Rosa took off her uniform, took off the light woolen underclothing she had worn beneath it, put on a wrapper from her pre-war wardrobe, and lay down on the bed, the tea tray on the table beside her.

"You might find my things for this evening," she directed the maid. "Crêpe de Chine or silk things—they are somewhere—and a dinner frock. There is a mauve one." She lay watching the girl.

"Father must have done well," she thought, "very well." She remembered the rocks ahead from which Loftus had been frantically and ineffectually striving to steer his bark of fortune four years before—business on the downgrade, machinery getting obsolete, capital not forthcoming, labor discontented. Why, she herself had not been able to pay her dressmaker, and she had never been so very extravagant, as pretty girls go.

"That car—a beauty," she thought. "And I wonder if the whole house has been done up, like the hall and this

room. It's nice." She snuggled under the eiderdown, grew dreamy—for she had traveled all night and day—and before the maid tiptoed from the room, had fallen asleep.

When she awoke—roused by the return of the maid, who switched on the light—it was after seven o'clock. The maid said:

"I've prepared a bath for you, miss. Will you go now? I'll lay your things out exactly ready. Dinner is at eight." Like the whole household, in some inscrutable manner, she had wind of the Wyngate Cox affair, and she knew of the evening's arrangements.

Rosa went, yawning.

The bathroom had been redecorated, too. It was black and white, mostly white—rather a novel scheme. It glittered with glass shelves and silvery taps. The air was hazy with perfumed steam. Her favorite bath salts had been put lavishly into the water. It was nice, very nice. She sighed with pleasure. And later, before her glass, in the mauve gown with her mother's pearls, the pleasure grew. It was as if some part of her had been starved, had only just realized its hunger, and was feeding quietly, luxuriously, almost sensuously, on the very food it most craved. She even enjoyed the covert admiring looks of the servants she met as she went downstairs.

Loftus was there before her, in the drawing-room, an attractive figure of an elderly man, as he very well knew. As she moved across the room to him, she was aware how he, too, had changed like the house. The verge of war had found him on the verge of ruin. Now the shadow had left him. He was light, debonair, enjoying life to the full, though, as always, he retained the restraint of the *gourmet* who can hold the brimming cup with a steady hand.

"Father," said the girl, "you must be rich."

Cyril shifted his feet slightly, put his hands in his pockets. His dinner jacket fitted creaselessly over his still straight back and shoulders. His eyes betrayed a wary amusement and satisfaction.

"Yes, love," he said, in a voice that was also full of satisfaction, "we're tolerably well-to-do now. I like the term 'well-to-do.' It expresses a sorter snug—er—fatness. Yes I can give Rosa little things she wants now."

"The new car——"

"You like her, eh?"

"She's a beauty. You'll let me take her out to-morrow?"

"You shall drive her in the park. I'll be proud."

"My bedroom—thank you so much——"

"Not at all, love. You shan't thank me. I don't think it looks bad, though. We kept to your old choice of colors. Women know their own backgrounds best. Cox said something about having sent some flowers——"

"Ah, they were his?" She turned a little away from Cyril. "I must thank him."

"He'll be here soon."

A short silence. A servant came in and drew the curtains on the spring evening. The girl sighed.

"Here you shut out all that," she murmured.

The servant went out; a red coal fell softly from the grate. Rosa walked slowly up the room and down again. Loftus regarded her narrowly and with pride and appreciation.

She came to a stop in front of him.

"How did you manage it, father? Five years ago, things were going badly with you. Then the war—— And yet you've retrieved your fortune."

"One man's poison, love, is another man's meat," said Cyril.

"You are not a—— Oh, no! No!"

"A what, love?"

"A profiteer, father."

"I believe men less enterprising than

myself have applied that title to me. What of it?"

After a short silence, she began again, hesitatingly.

"You got government contracts—for certain things, I suppose?"

"Yes, my dear. Fat contracts."

"But—the outlay of capital on the plant—and so on—before you could compete with newer, richer firms——"

"My dear, had I continued in private manufacture, the outlay would have been necessary or we'd have gone under. But I tell you I got war-office contracts."

"But could you, under those conditions, do the work as—as quickly and—as cheaply—as—as other firms?"

"My dear, the contracts were offered to me. Who am I to refuse?"

"Father, you cut your prices, didn't you?"

"No, my dear, I was not such a fool."

"But——"

"That very charming young man of yours, love, introduced me to the right men, used his influence. And—— But it's not women's business how these things are arranged. Men's work—leave it to men. Be sweet to your young man to-night—that's your part, dear. Nothing more."

"Father!"

"My dear?"

"Out there we don't begin to understand the profiteer. We don't begin to understand the man who wouldn't cut his prices, who wouldn't put himself and his money and his present and his future at the service of his country."

"Out there, my dear, you all get a trifle unbalanced."

She looked at him under straight black brows drawn down.

"You speak, my dear, almost as if I'd done some one an injury. I turned out good work—er—fairish—as good as any one else."

"But didn't you take contracts that

more up-to-date firms could have got through quicker?"

"Does that concern me, dear? Who am I to refuse the war office?"

"Refuse? You must have tendered——"

"Perhaps. Perhaps. Business is business. One must go out to meet it these days. It doesn't drop from heaven." Then a bell rang. "There's Cox!" he exclaimed, in smiling relief.

The girl, sitting on the arm of a chesterfield couch, was looking toward the door when the young guardsman came in. In his dark-blue undress uniform, fitting like a kid glove, and with eagerness breaking his usual blasé calm, he was a figure to stir the heart of any woman for whom that eagerness was born. He looked this—the perfect lover. And as, with the quick grace of the athletic man, he moved to her and took her hand and looked down at her and said, "Rosa! At last!" she was stirred deeply. Thrills ran through her. She was rose pink and shy—an adorable girl.

"She looks well, Cox, doesn't she?" said Cyril from the hearth-rug. "Army life hasn't quite made a hag of her, what?"

"You've come through quite safely, Rosa," said the young man with a laugh, but feelingly.

His light touch on her arm besought her to sit down on the chesterfield. She seated herself, and he sat beside her. She felt very happy. The romance that absence had woven around him during the red years was on the way to culmination.

Cyril looked past them with opaque gray eyes. His own time was not over. That is what he was indefinitely thinking. With the girl married well, settled, the unknown lay before him again. He was not an adventurer, far from it, but he had an inclination to wander a little—new lands, new scenes, new women; he had thought vaguely

of a sort of Indian summer for himself. Money was now plentiful, he would be untrammelled——

At dinner he sat between the two young people, urbane, smiling, too tolerant and anticipatory to be envious. He had uses for his world yet.

He gave them, first, a cocktail, the mixing of which was his own secret, then champagne, then very old brandy for Cox and himself and *crème de menthe* for the girl. He had ordered, too, an especially pleasing dinner, and the cook had not failed him. The nice-looking parlor maid whom he liked to have about him, both for table service and valeting, hovered over the feast like a sophisticated angel.

Coffee was served at table. It was pleasantly informal to sit there, the three of them, and not send the girl to the drawing-room alone for the dull quarter of an hour; and as he took his coffee cup, he caught the parlor maid's eye. A dimple strove in her right cheek. She went out and came back and said to him:

"A call has just come for you from So-and-so, sir, asking if you can meet him at his club in ten minutes. It is important."

"Rosa, my dear," said Cyril, rising, "Cox, a thousand apologies. But it is important. I must go—if you will allow me?"

The parlor maid retired discreetly with him, to hold his overcoat.

Cox had finished his brandy and, under the amber lights, was looking at Rosa. He used great restraint toward the women of his own world, even when he felt passionately toward them, and though the girl troubled him and he loved her, and though she was in a soft mood—the woman's soft mood which he well knew—he suffered himself barely to touch her fingers twining round her wineglass stem.

"Rosa," he said at last, "you are—
are prettier."

"I'm glad you think so, Wyn," she answered. "I want you to think so."

"It's been an—awfully long time."

"Yes, but one was so busy——"

"You forgot me, did you?"

"I didn't forget you, Wyn."

"Did you think of me often?"

She was reluctant to tell him how often she had thought of him—not during the hard and breathless days, perhaps, but always at night, when she had laid her drowsy head upon her pillow. She was reluctant, but her downward glance and half smile confessed for her.

"I thought of you most days and most nights," he said, taking the liqueur glass from her fidgeting fingers, setting it aside, and holding her hand.

"We have a lot to tell each other," said Rosa.

She stammered a little. Cox smiled. She was shy and putting him off. It would be only a little while, though. His clasp relaxed slightly, so that her hand, which had resisted just a tiny bit, lay in his of its own free will, and then it did not resist.

"Do I seem a complete stranger to you, Rosa?" he asked.

The parlor maid came in, having done her part as arranged with her master.

"I have lighted the drawing-room, miss," she murmured, hovering.

Rosa got up and, followed by Cox, went across the hall to the other apartment, softer, more amenable, more private altogether than the dinner-table scene. The chesterfield was drawn near the fire. She took one corner of it and Cox the other.

In silence they lighted fresh cigarettes.

"I should like to get you an amethyst-glass holder and box—amethyst's your color, isn't it?—engraved with your initials. They're new—the—the charmingest things!" he said.

"It would be sweet of you, Wyn," she answered.

Cox could not take his eyes from her. The talk dallied between them, each hesitating, waiting.

"You're glad to be home, through with it all, Rosa?"

"In a way, yes."

"What do you mean, dear—in a way?" You've come back to your right place, surely. Public opinion, I know, was all in favor of women doing all the things they did do, but I for one am glad to see them back, if only they come back just the same, as you have, haven't you—dear?"

"Oh, Wyn! How can I be the same?"

"What do you mean, Rosa?"

"Why, the things I've seen!"

"Yes, yes. There's the horrible part of it! The things women have seen!"

"I wouldn't have missed seeing them for the world, Wyn, since they were there to be seen."

"I'd rather you'd missed them."

"Why, Wyn? And the things one heard! Being women and sheltered, the things we heard beat the things we saw! I wouldn't have missed one—not a dreadful one—though."

"Forget it quickly."

"Who wants to forget?"

"The men who love you, Rosa, want you to forget. I wish you'd stayed here in London——"

"Dancing—dining——"

"You could have been a V. A. D., or there was canteen work, or—flag days."

"As it was, I was right in it. Glorious! But one can't come out just the same."

"Tell me about it," he said indulgently, biding his time.

"There's nothing to tell, and yet too much to begin telling."

"Women love riddles."

"It isn't a riddle. It's just simplicity itself. But I know one thing—I couldn't take up the old life."

"No, dear? You will not be asked to take it up, will you?"

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She glanced at him, arrested.

"There is a new life for you, isn't there?" said Cox, leaning toward her, taking her finger tips, and stroking two pink nails in an impalpable caress.

"Yes, I am going to have a new life, Wyn."

"Rosa!"

She looked up and down. She sighed suddenly and passionately.

"Oh, Wyn!" she whispered.

Cox threw away his cigarette, took her's from her fingers and tossed that away also, drew, with one lithe movement, close to her, and took her in his arms. She let him hold her to his heart; she shut her eyes, put her face against his neck, and thought to herself, as she had thought of the white-and-purple room, the malmaisons, and the scented bath: "It's nice."

She heard him whispering: "Darling! Darling! Darling!"

She made the littlest movement of drawing nearer to him, and in a moment his embrace tightened and he was kissing her.

"Kiss me!" he whispered, at first begging; and then, as he grew surer, ordering her. When he ordered, she smiled, put her arms slowly up around his neck, and kissed him.

"There!" she murmured, putting her face down against his neck again.

"I adore you, Rosa!" said Cox.

"Do you, Wyn?"

"Say you love hearing it."

"I do love hearing it."

"That's what's so wonderful about you—you haven't got hard; you haven't got what I call—*able*. War's made women look and be so dreadfully *able*—a man hesitates to use the dear old language to them. But you—you're still my darling, soft, dainty, pretty little girl."

He began to pet her.

She lay against his shoulder, smiling into the fire. He was a beautiful lover, finding all the things to say that a

woman best likes to hear. His shoulder was broad; his hands and mouth—respectful to women of his own world—were experienced; his caresses were perfection. And she thought this homecoming evening a golden dream, not to be surpassed.

"Darling," she heard him saying, "let's be married before May, before the season."

There came into the girl's head and heart a sort of cool wave. She had but laid resolution aside; she had not lost it. She was tasting things for which her heart had starved, but she was but tasting. There was a knowledge within which had murmured to her in the red days, whenever she had laid her head on her pillow to dream: "But you know you will never go back," or which had warned: "Test him. You know he must ring true. You have worked out here with true men and brave. You will never be blind again."

She stood; she steadied herself. The man's arms, the white-and-purple room upstairs, the malmaisons, the mauve frock, the sheer silk of all this momentary environment—these lost something of their suffocating power. She summoned her judgment and her will to work together. And the unease that Cox had overlaid reawoke in her. Her brain cleared, and again her body was her own, no longer under the thrall of suffocating sweetness.

"Before May?" he whispered. "In three or four weeks, Rosa?"

"No, Wyn," she said. "No."

"Why not, dearest?"

"I can't be married for a long time, Wyn."

"A long time! What is a long time, Rosa?"

"Years."

"Years! My dearest, don't be simply preposterous! Long engagements—Why, we—our sort of people—never

have long engagements. We have nothing to wait for."

"I have, Wyn. I have something to wait for."

He looked at her now with a keen, questioning anxiety, with a twinge of hurt and outraged suspicion.

"Rosa, I adore you."

"Wyn, I—I——"

"Tell me. Don't you love me?"

"I love your loving me, Wyn, but——"

"Rosa, it is—impossible that you don't love me! I mean—you put your arms around my neck."

"Yes. I—I——"

"It was sweet of you, dear. Forgive me for reminding you. But it meant a lot."

"Wyn?"

"A nice girl, a well-bred girl, a white girl, like you, Rosa, doesn't put her arms round a man's neck unless she loves him."

"Wyn——"

"You kissed me, dear."

"Because you——"

"Because I——"

"You asked me, Wyn."

"A nice girl, like you, Rosa, wouldn't have done it unless she loved the man."

"You don't admit that a nice girl has human moments, Wyn?"

"I don't—— What in God's name do you mean?"

"Let me go, Wyn."

Cox's arms had relaxed already. Drawing herself free, she rose and stood at a corner of the mantelpiece. He rose, too, immediately, and awaited her pleasure, standing at the opposite corner, fingering some silver ornament or other and holding himself under a stiff restraint. He repeated.

"What do you mean?"

"When I say I have something to wait for, Wyn, I mean I can't go back to the old, idle, purposeless life——"

"The life of a married woman purposeless!"

"I know what you mean. After a few years, the life of the average married society woman is just a round of fruitless amusements. It goes round and round and round, reaching nowhere."

"And where do you want to reach?"

"I am going to work and see."

"Work! What in God's name do you mean?"

"I mean work. Then in a year or two—or more—I could tell you if I could marry you."

"You ask me to wait a year or two—or more?"

"No, Wyn. That is as you like."

"But you admit you love me!"

"I do not admit it."

"You put your arms round my neck—you kissed me."

She flushed; her lips parted in protest.

"I am sorry," said Cox, but inexorably. Then, melting, he cried: "Rosa, I know you better than you know yourself, believe me! A white girl, like you, doesn't do these things unless——"

"I was glad to see you, Wyn. I loved being loved. I loved everything when I came home—my room, my old frocks, your flowers, for which I haven't said 'thank you!' It was sweet of you to send them."

He put this aside with a gesture.

"And so you're going to keep me waiting, Rosa."

"I must have time to think."

"Haven't you been thinking all this long while during which we've scarcely seen each other?"

"Yes, I have thought—and to that purpose, Wyn."

"What a purpose!" he exclaimed in deep disgust.

"You don't understand?"

"Understand! No, I don't understand! It's beyond my comprehension—or any other man's, I should think—that a nice girl, a well-bred girl, like you, Rosa, should let a man think she

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cares and then tell him she doesn't care; I say I know you, dear, better than you know yourself, and you do care. I could make you very happy." He drew closer once more. "Think, Rosa! We could be married almost at once. We'd go anywhere you liked. Then we'd come back the first week in May. You'd have such a season, Rosa! That's your true life, darling. All this cry for work for women, all this mucking and moiling—it's not for nice, well-bred women, not for our kind." He stood very close, put a hand on her scarcely veiled shoulder. "Look at me, darling. Tell me you will. Don't think. Don't imagine you've got any momentous decisions to make. Leave yourself to me. You belong to me, don't you, dearest?"

He would have put his arms about her again, but she was wiser now and eluded him. She withdrew to the back of the chesterfield and stood there, leaning her arms upon it, facing him.

"No, Wyn, I do not belong to you, or to any one. I am my own."

As she said this, a gladness fell on her. She heaved a sigh.

"Wyn, there is something else," she added. She would have drawn closer to him, in confidence, but something in his narrowed look kept her hesitating there behind the couch.

"Well?" he said with a formal politeness.

"Father has made money, hasn't he, Wyn?"

"I believe so."

He answered with the carelessness of one born to all the good things of fortune.

"He has made it out of the needs of the army?"

"Like many others. There was a demand and he supplied it."

"He got his contracts through you?"

"I was pleased to do what I could, Rosa. Oh, darling Rosa!"

"Don't, Wyn," she muttered, hanging

her head. She sighed. "He should never have been offered the work."

"That is a point which really could not be decided by any woman alive," said Cox, in a voice of displeased authority. "Women are too fond of talking of what they know nothing about."

She held her ground, a flicker of disdain on her face.

"I know enough to know what I have just said. I should prefer to make my own money than to benefit by his war profits."

"What in God's name— You speak as if your father had committed a criminal offense!"

"Poor, dear father! I'm quite aware, Wyn, that he kept within the law. There is no blame for him. But I want to stand on my own feet, financially, now that peace is here."

Cox stared narrowly.

"Really—I cannot take you seriously——"

"Can you take any woman seriously?"

"I take women as they're meant to be taken, Rosa."

"And how is that?"

"You will inevitably quarrel with my point of view."

"Oh, do I quarrel?"

"You do now. You argue. Horrible! And I said the army hadn't changed you! Loftus was mad—mad—to let you go!"

He turned about portentously to take a cigarette from the box on the mantelpiece, and then, behind him, he heard the girl laugh.

CHAPTER II.

There are notes in women's laughter that rouse cruelty in a man. Rosa's little laugh, cool and thoughtful, had this quality. It bored beneath Cox's arrogant calm, sent the blood up to his head, and set him thinking, "My God,

I'll take hold of her throat and stop that!"

In laughter she eluded him, and he was so desirous. Needless to say, he could not shoot out a savage hand, grasp the white throat, and shake her breathless. Ages of breeding and control were between him and such violence.

He stood rigidly, looking at her.

"You are amused?" he said.

Penitently she answered, "Oh, Wyn, not amused really—sorry and—interested. Oh, so interested!"

"I like your cool way of dissecting emotions, after I've just had you in my arms!"

She blushed.

"Wyn, if you understood——"

"I don't think I want to understand you, Rosa."

"Ah, Wyn, then we are poles apart."

"We seem to be, for," he said deftly, "you on your side don't want to make the smallest effort to understand me."

"But, Wyn, I do understand."

"You assume so."

"Why, I've been brought up to meet men like you all my life—I mean men with your point of view——"

"I don't think I am in the least prejudiced or bigoted, Rosa," said Cox heatedly.

"Men never do, dear."

He took a sharp breath and looked at her narrowly. His heart beat quicker, and his voice melted. "Dear," she had said. She had called him "dear." He spoke very softly again.

"Sit down, darling. Let me sit with you. Let us talk."

She moved forward very warily. She was wary of herself. Sitting down in a corner of the chesterfield couch, she twisted the string of pearls and looked down at her shoe tips. Cox seated himself very close to her.

"Rosa," he said, "I will say it all over again. I love you."

He looked at her closely. The hand

fiddling with the pearls trembled; her calm was forced; she was on guard! The young man's heart leaped with triumph, as the heart of many a man has done when he has discovered that. "I'll break down her guard!" he thought. He took her passionately into his arms and kissed her.

"Don't, Wyn!" she cried in a whisper.

"I will!" said Cox.

Again, for perhaps two seconds, she let herself go, thinking, "It's nice." But suddenly she felt him instinct with triumph; his arms crushed her, and he whispered:

"You see, darling, you see? You love me. There is only one way for you, dearest. Take it soon, love, take it soon!"

She broke away and stood at the other side of the room.

"Stay there, Wyn!" she cried, with an outstretched hand checking him.

Cox was not obedient; he followed and caught at the hand.

"You shouldn't do it!" she cried, trembling.

"My darling," said Cox hotly, "I shall do anything to persuade you! What do you expect of me?"

"Listen, Wyn. I've meant every word I've said."

"Impossible!" he said, unbelieving.

"I am going to work—and find out."

"My God! Find out what?"

"What to do. Wyn, I'm not going through life like a drone or a butterfly."

"Listen to me, Rosa. What on earth can you do?"

"I have an idea."

"Are you going to try to take a job that some demobilized soldier ought to have?" He thought: "That'll appeal to her!"

"No, Wyn, I shan't do that. I think I shall go into trade."

"Trade! Trade!"

"Father is in trade."

"Nonsense!" said Cox, again growing lordly in his mounting impatience. "It's quite a different thing."

"A different degree of the same thing. And why shouldn't I? The world is changing. All honest work is creditable now, Wyn."

"I'll get this madness out of you, Rosa! But now"—he schooled himself to tolerance—"exactly what do you propose to do?"

"Clothes, millinery—in a small way at first, of course."

"A shop! You unpractical darling! There you go at once, forgetting the business side of the affair! You've not thought you'll want capital?"

"Of course I've thought of it! All men like you think all women like me are born fools! I suppose father will lend me a few hundreds."

"Do you?" said Cox.

"You mean you'll persuade him not to help me?"

"He'll hate it as much as I do."

"If you persuade him, Wyn, no doubt he'll listen, as he owes you so much. But you won't! You won't be mean!"

She moved a little nearer, and he held out his arms and cried:

"Oh, Rosa! Kiss me, darling!"

He was barely giving her attention. Her eagerness was wasted. While she talked, he was thinking of her lips. Her eager talk died; she stepped back, moved round the couch again, and faced him across it.

"Oh, Wyn," she said, "if I kissed you, you'd disapprove of me again."

"What do you mean?"

"You reminded me that I'd—put my—my arms—"

"I should take it as meaning what I want you to mean, dear."

"And it would mean nothing except that I liked kissing you."

Cox looked as nearly embarrassed as so self-possessed a man could.

"You won't admit that a nice woman can have ordinary human moments, will

you, Wyn? Her moment has got to mean forever. You think she should mean all or nothing."

"I certainly do," said Cox.

She suddenly subsided upon the couch, leaned her head against the cushions, and laughed.

"Oh, Wyn!" she said. "Oh, Wyn!"

"You are easily amused, Rosa."

"But, Wyn, in some ways, nice women are exactly the same as bad ones."

"You don't know what you are talking about," replied Cox coldly.

"I know too well for your liking, Wyn."

Cox opened his eyes and lifted his brows.

"I was thinking," she explained, "of kissing. That is why I laughed."

"Indeed," said Cox.

"Yes, indeed, Wyn. I want to tell you a little story."

Cox stared.

"It happened in France."

"Indeed?" said Cox distastefully, walking about.

"Yes, indeed, Wyn. I won't bore you with minor details. We were in Amiens for a few days. I'd worked till I was ready to drop for the past week. And I had to drive a general out to Abbeville. All my drivers were out, and I had to go myself. After I'd dropped him and started back, I had engine trouble. It was cold, dark, and wet. I was tired, and the road was bad. I worked on that damned engine till I'd no more kick in me than she had. And because I was a woman—and there was no one to see me make a fool of myself—I thought I would just sit down and cry for a few minutes. I wanted to. So I sat down on the running board and got out my grubby hanky—and I heard the most beautiful sound in France—a little Douglas ticking along. The man stopped the bike to ask what was wrong, and between us we got my car going

again. But before she got going, he had seen that I was tired, wet, and had been crying. And he said: 'You poor, dear women! What on earth we'd do without you I don't know, but we don't like your going through it like this.' And he turned the lamp on me and looked at my face, and then put his arms round me and kissed me. It was really better at the moment than brandy."

Cox gave furious and polite attention.

"He was a Guards corporal," said Rosa, looking at her shoe-tips.

"A Guards corporal!"

"Later on, after we'd left, I heard from you that you'd actually been in Amiens at the time. We were only there a day or two, though, and out most of the while. He may have been one of your own corporals, Wyn."

"My God," said Cox.

"I saw him again," said Rosa, "by chance just before we left. We had a few minutes in which to hold the queerest conversation."

"I have no doubt it was a queer conversation."

"Thank you, Wyn. What I mean is we crowded such a lot into it. I told him, I believe, that I intended going into business after the war, and he gave me a card and told me his advice would always be available."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed, Wyn."

"May I know the fella's name?"

"Rutherford."

"I had a corporal named Rutherford," said Cox, red as fire with anger and running a finger around his collar as if it felt tight.

"Rather a big man, Wyn, with a very resolute manner—"

"Never had occasion to notice the fella's personal charms."

He walked up and down. Then he burst out:

"Loftus was mad—~~mad~~ to let you go!"

"Surely you realize, Wyn, that in times like these people think differently—act differently—"

"I know that women—yes, and mere chits of girls—have been given a damn' sight too much license! 'Given?' They've taken it for themselves! No one to stop 'em! Respectable women—girls like you, Rosa—during this war they've—"

"Overthrown a few ornamental standards of conduct and broken a few superfluous minor rules of life. Yes, Wyn?"

"I would have put it differently."

"I will not have you put it differently."

"As you wish, of course."

He walked about again. She felt remote, worlds removed from him. He was very angry, and surprised and balked.

"One of my corporals!" he exclaimed.

She smiled reminiscently. Her sangfroid disgusted him.

"And a rather wonderful man," she said. "He must have been a good corporal."

"Well, I'm damned!" said Cox.

He felt that he had come to the end of the things he had left which were fit to say to a woman such as he would have had Rosa to be. He could have put the matter to Loftus otherwise. He stopped his pacing of the room to look at her, and there came over him again the overpowering feeling of how sweet she was, how strong, graceful, and alluring. She teased him horribly, too, with this new poise of hers—a poise of mind and body suggesting greater knowledge and deeper thought than he cared for a woman to show. It fascinated, disturbed, and angered him.

He stood looking at her again with growing passion.

"I wish you hadn't told me, hadn't talked to me as you have, Rosa. But I love you. Wipe it all out. Marry me and live the life you were ordained for."

"I have still to find out what that is, Wyn."

"Nonsense! It's preordained for all women."

"All women?"

"Well, all attractive and good women," said Cox, his fastidiousness greatly offended by the necessity of thus qualifying.

"I should love to discuss with you just what an attractive and good woman should be to enter the category."

"I dare say. Women are getting discursive."

"You probably set some pretty tough rules for us, Wyn."

"I haven't the slightest idea what you mean, Rosa."

"I can explain."

"No doubt. But I will not trouble you."

"It would be no trouble."

"A pleasure, I dare say, Rosa. Women are getting a good deal too introspective about improper subjects."

"What is an improper subject?"

"One I refuse to discuss with you, Rosa."

"I wonder what would happen to men, Wyn, if we were as hard on them as they are on us."

"If you find the protective instinct a hardship——"

"No! No! It is the law-giving instinct——"

"It is all the same," said Cox.

"I believe you, Wyn." She laughed.

"You are amused again, Rosa."

"You amuse me, Wyn."

"I won't do it any more."

He stood on the hearthrug, sulking. He looked extremely handsome.

For half an hour fitful conversation alternated with silences. He looked at

her narrowly, and dispassionately she returned his close gaze.

"I couldn't have believed," he said presently, "that you had this kind of reception prepared for me."

She answered meekly, "I really didn't know it myself, Wyn. I'm sorry."

A door opened and shut, a light voice hummed a light song, and Cyril entered. Looking from one to the other, he affected a cosy indifference to the iced atmosphere.

"I had to go out," he said. "I was awfully sorry on your first evening home, my darling girl. Awfully sorry it should happen when you were dining, Cox. But a man rang me up—— Have you swapped all your experiences?"

"I've had none of Wyn's," Rosa replied with a gleam of laughter.

"I should have been happy to tell you anything you felt curiosity about," said Cox.

"My God!" thought Cyril, bending to pat a couple of cushions before he sat on them. "What's gone wrong?"

"I'll have a cigarette, Wyn," said Rosa.

"Virginian or Egyptian?" he replied coldly.

"I'd have sworn," thought Cyril, "that the girl was in a marriageable mood. And as for Wyngate——well, poor fella!" He felt a dimly reminiscent sympathy for Cox's state of mind.

"If anything's gone wrong," he thought, "I dunno what more she wants. He's a reg'lar picture and a good sort, and it's a good match looking at it all ways; and I'd like it." He took an alarmed look toward that Indian-summer scene where he had seen himself—— "Surely," he thought, "I don't have to take the girl about! Wyngate all ready, too, and willing, poor fella!"

A stiff silence ensued which not all Cyril's tact could break skillfully.

Rosa broke it, with effect if not with skill. Leaning back on the cushions, blowing smoke ceilingward, "Father," said she, "you shouldn't have left us. We've spent the whole time quarreling."

"Oh, not quite the whole time!" said Wyngate fiercely, and her blush rewarded him for the cut.

"A quarrel," said Cyril blandly, "can be the most delicious incident in the world. A really artistic quarrel—especially between young people of your age, God bless you! Well, I've enjoyed many. But when you reach my age, my dear souls, you'll have lost, among the other gifts of youth, the art of quarreling. At fifty, a quarrel is squalor."

While he spoke, in his quiet manner at once precious and bland, the girl looked at him absorbedly. She caught a wildly calculating quality in his survey of her. The survey was good-humored, but the least thought anxious. She knew he was wondering: "What is she up to! What has she done?" And, getting up, she stood between the two men, fingering a little nervously a fold of her gown.

"Father," she said suddenly, her face like a rose, "I am not going to marry Wyngate. Good night. Good night, Wyn." Breathless, she went out of the room.

She ran upstairs and shut herself into the purple-and-white room. The air was cloyed with carnations. She sat down in a low chair, put her elbows on her knees, her chin in her palms, and stared out into space. A long mirror was opposite her, and she found herself looking in. She was a woman who unmistakably had been kissed, and showed it. She recognized the fact. The kisses were embodied and looked at her out of the mirror. She brushed her hand across her lips and sighed. It had been—"very nice." But she would sacrifice it to freedom and

the ineffable glory of the unknown adventure.

"To-morrow," she thought, "to-morrow I must begin. Not a day shall go by, or I'll be smothered into acquiescence."

The danger of things sweet and soft also embodied itself and looked out at her from the mirror. It took shapes like the reflected white bed with downy quilt of amethyst color, the malmaisons, and the dressing-table array of scents, powder bowls, ivory brushes.

"To-morrow!" she resolved.

She heard, below, the slam of the front door.

Wyngate had gone.

She went to her door and looked out. Cyril was in the hall. Peering down, she could see him standing there thoughtfully. The top of his gray head was very sleek and the parting perfection; his shoulders were as straight as a boy's. And when she called softly, "Father!" and he looked up to see his girl leaning over the stair rail, his smile was charming. She suddenly thought:

"That he should be saddled with a grown-up daughter! Rather a shame!"

She laughed down at him.

"What an attractive young man you look!" she said. "Not that I called you to tell you that, dear, but to ask you, won't you look in and talk to me for a moment when you come up?"

"I'm coming now, Rosa," said Cyril, mounting the stairs and switching out the lights as he advanced.

She retreated into her room, and he followed. She sat down again in the low chair and pushed a cigarette box toward him. Each lighted a cigarette, Cyril leaning negligently against the high foot rail of the bed.

"Well, my dear child," said he, "what's all this?"

"You mean about Wyn and me?"

"Of course, of course, child."

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"I really had taken it for granted. You allowed him to take it for granted——"

"I'd never promised anything."

"You gave him a good many favors. We both took it for granted. He's been like a son-in-law already to me."

"I'm sorry."

"'Pon my word, it seems such a dirty trick."

"I don't understand."

"Yes, you do, child. He's done so much."

"Not for me."

"For me, for your sake."

"That's not my fault, father."

"I shan't reopen any discussion about business with you, my dear," said Cyril.

"I have some quite new business to discuss with you, father. So I'll leave yours alone."

"Thank you, my dear," said he with smiling cynicism.

The girl smoked. She was more than a little nervous as to her chances of success with him.

During the pause, Cyril resumed:

"The duchess took it for granted, too."

"My marriage with Wyn? Dear old fool!"

"In her own world, an extremely clever and able woman, my dear."

"People didn't just drop their lives when war broke out and find themselves able to take them up again, exactly the same, when war was over."

"That is some involved way of making an explanation about yourself, dear child?"

"I mean, I cannot be now exactly what I was before."

"Fundamentally, my dear, you have not changed. A fundamental change is beyond your power. You are still a woman, with a woman's instincts in you and a woman's vocation before you."

"The vocation is wider, though."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear, Rosa!" said

Cyril, with a helpless and graceful folding of the hands that was one of his most attractive gestures.

"Darling," she cried, "will you help?"

His gray eyes regarded her, smiling and opaque.

"Now, Rosa!"

"You'll lend me five hundred pounds, father?"

"Not five hundred farthings, my dear—nor five."

"But you can afford it!"

"Perhaps. But I'm not going to back your wildcat schemes."

"Wyn has made you promise!"

"Wyn has 'made' me do nothing, my dear. I heard what he had to say, and he heard what I had to say. I will present a drawing-room version to you, if you like, of what one said to t'other."

The girl flung her cigarette from her into the grate with a passionate gesture. She threw one knee over the other and twined restless fingers around it.

"Wyn," she exclaimed, "has spent most of his time at a base; you have made hay in and out of season the last four years. War has done nothing for you. How can you understand?"

"War has made women terribly melodramatic," said Cyril.

She swung her foot.

"You have nice feet and nice ankles, now that they're correctly shod again," said Cyril, attracted by the movement.

"Damn my feet and ankles!" said Rosa.

With a twinkling eye, he responded:

"The day will come when you will be thankful for them, my dear. For skins spoil, and hair goes gray, and figures stiffen, but beautiful feet and ankles remain beautiful feet and ankles until the end is so near as makes no difference."

A pause marked her entire detachment from the subject.

"Then you will not help me, father?"

"To keep a shop—so I understand

from Wyngate? No, my dear. You'd better go through the season as you are, and I'll have to take you about."

"Poor father! I won't trouble you."

"You can't stay in town and be out of things."

"I am going to stay in town and be out of things."

"Now you're getting ungrateful, dear child."

"I'm sorry you think so, father."

"Good night, child," said Cyril, stroking her cheek.

Again she was alone.

She tucked her hand into a battered dispatch case and brought out a small bundle of letters tied together. Among them was what she sought—a card:

MESSRS. RUTHERFORD & SEXTON
Architects

Pall Mall, S.W.

She thought ruefully: "I'll have to go to him. Women still have to go to men for advice about business matters, money, all that." It hurt her growing spirit, caused her to feel a little futile; but she resolved: "To-morrow I'll do it."

The next morning brought her, among other correspondence from friends who had heard of her return, a note delivered by hand, from the Duchess of Clevemoor.

CHAPTER III.

It was a dear and delightful note written by the clever hand of a great woman. The tone of it could not but subtly please Rosa. It was kind and dignified and warm, just such a little note as would not be written to her by new friends she might make in a new world of work, strife, and business. She read it first of the letters, and stretched out her hand for her bedside telephone to answer it at once. Yes, she would love to lunch alone with the duchess at two, and talk, and talk. Even though she knew, with a little grimace, what

the talk portended, she wanted it. After the subject of Wyngate, who was the duchess' favorite nephew, was dismissed, the wise woman would give sympathetic ear to other plans.

She found the duchess not alone, however. Another middle-aged woman was with her, tall, thin, dark, languid, intense, and beautiful.

"Darling Rosa!" said the duchess in her soft voice. And, taking the girl's hand, she said: "Marie, here is the dearest girl in the world, Miss Rosa Loftus, the Comtesse Lavallière."

The three went almost directly in to lunch.

"I have seen poor Wyngate, child," said the duchess, heaving a little placid sigh.

"I am sorry——"

"Yes, yes," said the duchess, patting her hand. "So are we all sorry. That delightful father of yours will be sorriest of all. You don't mind my talking of it before the countess? She has the greatest sympathy, my dear, with all these things. I wish you could talk to her about it for hours and hours——"

"I should have nothing to say," said the countess, her dark eyes searching the girl. "It is every woman for herself, dearest. We are all blind. All stumble, and many fall. And it is such a tremendous thing, this marriage, so lightly undertaken. Miss Loftus wishes to think?"

"I didn't think," murmured the duchess.

"If one doesn't think before, one thinks afterward," said the countess.

"Tell me, my dear," said the duchess to Rosa, "tell us, the countess and me, what you have in that very enterprising head of yours!"

The great lady looked rather faintly at Rosa's head, crowned with a hat from the best milliner in town.

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love," said she, "and make a fortune? And how is it done?"

The duchess, with her light, placid questions, seemed to the girl to be ages and worlds removed from her own wondering, searching self; but, looking up, she caught the countess' dark eyes, filled with a vivid interest.

"I am going into business," she said. "I've not been trained to work, I can drive a car, and that's all."

"Business is a technical affair," said the duchess weightily.

"But hats—every woman's business—hats are what I shall do."

"Will that delightful father of yours help the scheme?"

"Not by so much as a penny."

The duchess put her head on one side, and smiled. The countess smiled, but differently.

"So much better the fight," she murmured.

"Ah!" the girl cried, warming to her. "You understand how I feel!"

"I confess I don't," said the duchess. "Isn't it better and finer, my dear, to marry and be the mother of children than to keep a little shop in—where will it be?—Shaftesbury Avenue?"

"To marry and be the mother of the right man's children, yes."

"You cannot corrupt her, Anna!" cried the countess. "You cannot corrupt her! But of course, my dear Miss Loftus, you realize this—that the right man may be at the other side of the world marrying the wrong woman at this very minute."

The duchess chimed: "That's how I always think about it."

"And I," murmured Rosa, "have never thought about it at all."

"At your age, no," said the countess, "but in a few years, you'll sit among your hats, wondering. And you'll marry some one, any one, just to answer your own questions."

"Poor dear Wyngate!" murmured the duchess.

"You'll help me?" said Rosa, laying her hand on the great lady's plump fingers. "You'll buy my hats, and bring your friends? Ah, do!"

"She wheedles prettily," said the countess, with her sad and languid smile. "Very prettily. You remind me, my dear Miss Loftus, of a poor sister of mine. My sister, Cécile, Anna."

The two women exchanged understanding glances, and a condoling murmur came from the duchess. The Frenchwoman bent forward, fixed her eyes on the girl's face, and continued:

"You interest me so, my dear, because this idea of yours—this hat shop—it is what my poor Cécile came to. My poor Cécile did a thing absolutely unexampled in the annals of families of the rank of ours. She refused to be betrothed to the man our parents had chosen for her; she ran away with an Italian singer in the cafés, and married him. Years after, I had a letter from her. She vowed she had been wonderfully and entirely happy, but he was now dead. She had returned to Paris with her little daughter, and together they were keeping a hat shop. She asked me, as you asked just now, 'You will buy my hats and bring your friends? My dear sister, you will help me?' But—just as our parents, after she went away, forbade me to communicate with her, so, after my marriage, when that letter came, my husband forbade me to answer it. And it is only now that I am a widow, my dear Miss Loftus, a widow and childless, that I am free to look for my poor Cécile. I traced her from Paris to Roubaix, to Brussels, to Bruges, where she died during the German occupation. And of her daughter I can find no trace. I am a lonely woman, and I want to take her as my daughter, but I cannot find her."

"She may have married."

"I hope not!" said the countess with

aversion. "Because, if so, entirely lacking position, she must have married into the bourgeoisie.

"But your sister was happy."

"It is not the right kind of happiness at all," said the duchess, breaking in crisply.

"We do not know," said the countess. "We do not know."

Sitting there at the table polished like satin, in which flowers and silver and cut glass were reflected as clearly as in a mirror, with the two worldly, easeful, and softly nurtured women, the girl could see and feel, as if she were still out on that dark, cold, and wet road of France, the human touch of arms and sense of lips; she heard again, the quick, strong voice that had heartened her. The vivid contrast of her present brought the picture of the slashing rain, the darkness, the dim, low shape of the car, and the powerful lamp beam cutting athwart the blackness. That night the whole world around had seemed black, though the faint, incessant thunder in the eastward sky had proclaimed where blazed and shot the fires of hell. She had been out of it, part of it, a cog in the mighty driving wheel of dynamic forces. And now—back here in this soft room, silkily dressed, beautifully hatted, eating out-of-season strawberries with these two women; these two women who had sold flags on Serbia's Day at the Ritz, or opened a bazaar in aid of little Belgium, or entertained a few wounded and wondering Tommies brightly at tea, and felt their good work done!

Rosa laughed.

"Yes, love?" queried the duchess.

"I was remembering," she explained, "that I have met a great many people of what you would call the lower and middle classes on an equality these last few years, and they were very kind to me. I have met fine men who never went to public schools, and women and

girls who at no time in their lives had earned more than twenty-five shillings a week, and kept their independence on it."

"What kind of women, love?" said the duchess, brightly interested.

"Many were ladies."

"Yes; a poor lady has a very sad life," said the duchess with an air of perfect understanding.

"No sadder than a poor scullery maid's."

"Oh, my dear!" said the duchess.

"Those people not only think differently, but are made differently, from the classes above them."

"There is going to be a wonderful leveling."

"Never! Never!" said the duchess firmly.

The girl thought: "They haven't the least idea what they're talking about." But, respecting their rooted traditions, their immemorial frame of mind, she listened prettily to the further few remarks which the duchess made on the subject. "Now," she thought, "if I married Wyn, I should have to listen prettily all my life. This is exactly the kind of thing I should be doing." And when she had drunk her coffee, kissed and thanked the duchess for so promptly sparing her an hour of valuable time, and taken leave of the interesting dark-eyed countess, she found herself outside the Park Lane house with a sense of immense relief.

She belonged no more to all this.

She felt alien. She felt like the traveled member of a family who has been out to far places where he has done memorable work, and who, returning, sits in his old circle listening to their talk—their talk going round and round in the ways where it went when he left them, soaring no higher, delving no lower, reaching no further out. Their immunity could not be pierced, and it was better so. If you pierced it, they would be everywhere vulnerable. It

was well that they should cover themselves with delicate coats of mail.

Walking slowly down Park Lane, she unfurled her sunshade, a new one bought that morning, and costly. She looked very nice, the charming idler, and she knew it. But yesterday's resolve guided her feet across Piccadilly, down St. James', up Pall Mall, till she stayed before the offices of Rutherford & Sexton.

When a clerk asked her name, she remembered that she had never given it to Rutherford.

"He would not know it," she said.

For a second the man hesitated, murmuring some formality about the necessity of making appointments. Then her appearance, her clothes, her manner—the charming idler—won. She was undoubtedly rich. She was the class of client they liked to see there. He retreated to an inner room, came out smiling politely.

"Will you step this way, madam?"

She went into a small, cool room, and found herself in Miles Rutherford's presence.

She held out her hand.

"Why!" he said in a quiet voice. "You!"

"And you," she replied.

She was immediately happy. It was all so simple. They could talk their hearts out, without camouflage. Once again he confirmed with barely a word her first impression that he was the simplest and cleverest man she had ever met.

CHAPTER IV.

"Sit here," said Rutherford.

She sat where he had placed her, facing the light, while he stood back, half across the room, looking at her. They stared at each other with unashamed curiosity. The man laughed first.

"Forgive me, but I must look at you. You are so different."

"And you. You are worlds away from your other self."

"I wonder which is yourself, Miss——"

"Loftus. Rosa Loftus."

"Thank you. Are you really the khaki girl or the girl I see before me?"

"The girl you see before you is very much camouflaged."

He smiled.

"It is very charming to see her, nevertheless," he said. He sat down. "But you were going to call on me—if you honored me at all—for business advice."

She began to explain: "It is what I have come for."

"I am at your service."

She looked straight into his squarely cut brown face, with the intent eyes of light gray.

"I have just been lunching," she said, the duchess being the last impression in her mind, "with a woman who very much wants me to marry her nephew."

"Who is the woman, if I may know?"

"The Duchess of Clevemoor."

Rutherford laughed heartily.

"Oh, Miss Loftus, I don't think that you should come here for advice! Your friends would hate it!"

"Never mind my friends. I want to talk to you."

"We have talked before, haven't we?" said Rutherford.

"That was a wonderful talk! But very short. I've often hoped I should meet you again in France."

"It was long odds against that," he replied. "For one thing, you held a commission. I didn't." His eyes shone with laughter.

"Wasn't it absurd?"

"What? Our talk the day after we'd met in the rain—or that night?"

The girl became rose pink.

"No! No! Just—the commission and otherwise." Her eyes dropped to the ferule of the slender new sunshade.

She remembered the kiss that Wyngate's kisses had not erased.

Rutherford saw the memory in her transparent face. He had not forgotten, either. But he put her at her ease again by affected obliviousness.

"And you are not going to marry now?" he asked.

"No. I want to work."

"Who is the man, if I may know that, too? It's possible I may know him. We have a lot of clients."

"Wyngate Cox. He's in the Guards."

Rutherford checked a swift ejaculation. A light blazed in his quick eyes.

"Oh—ah," he said, "I know. The Earl of Ladbroke's second son. I know."

"He was at Amiens then—only I didn't know it."

"I did," smiled Rutherford. "I was one of his corporals."

"Ah! You were?"

"I was. He wouldn't have had occasion to notice me, of course. I can't claim to know him—except in the pretty intimate way in which men know about their officers in France. We knew 'em better than their own friends did sometimes."

"No doubt," she said vaguely.

• She was anxious to get to personal business. A short silence fell.

She broke into her business rather nervously.

"I want your advice about an enterprise. I'm going into trade."

"That's interesting for you. How may I help?"

"I shall want premises."

"Of course. Just a small place?"

"A little room—ground floor if possible—for hats, and perhaps a basement room to make them in."

"You haven't anything in view."

"Nothing at all."

"We'll ring up a few estate agents."

He stretched a hand to his telephone and drew a pencil and pad toward him.

"Stay! What rent d'you want to pay?"

"As little as I can. I've got no money."

"Your friends—relatives—will back you?"

"No. Not a penny. I thought—I've been thinking this morning—that there'd be some way of getting a loan from a money lender, though I don't know what security—"

"We'll talk about that later."

He occupied himself with telephoning. Her elbow on her chair arm, her chin in her hand, she leaned forward a little, looking at him intently. A word, a touch, on that dark road in France, had left upon her a long impression. Now it seemed extraordinarily familiar, yet excitingly strange, to meet and touch hands again, to have mind answering mind and—yes, memory refreshing memory.

In appearance, of course, he had changed as much as she had. His hair was well cut; his boots were well made; his clothes had a glovellike fit and yet a masterly easiness. All this gave to his air and voice and look an even greater confidence than they had expressed before, and she had known him then for a master of men. Those four years taught women as well as men to judge truly. Her eyes were opened widely upon him when he glanced round, caught her look, and smiled.

He went on with his telephoning, jotted down the replies, then hung up the receiver and said:

"Well?"

"Well?"

"Were you wondering whether to trust me, after all?"

"No. I was satisfying curiosity."

"I suppose I look as different now as you do, Miss Loftus. Those were wonderful days?"

"Wonderful days."

"Great, big, red days," said Rutherford. "Men will miss them."

"Gladly?"

"Not altogether," said Rutherford.

"Man is a fighting animal when all's said and done, and you can't alter him."

"And woman?"

"You can't alter woman; really."

"So my father told me last night."

"When you wouldn't marry this chap?"

"Yes. Every one concerned, except myself, was very disappointed."

"Ah, well," said Rutherford, fiddling with his pencil, "let 'em get over it. Live the life you choose for yourself. We were talking about money."

"Yes. What do you advise me to do?"

"To get money?" His eye ran over her clothes.

She answered his inquiring look:

"Yes. I know I'm expensively turned out. I can send my dress bills in to my father, you see."

"But your private pocket is empty?"

"Practically so."

"An extraordinary idea or system!" said Rutherford half to himself. "Do you know," he said, "if I married a woman without a penny, what I should do? I shouldn't dole out an allowance; I should settle the biggest sum I could afford on her so that she could have it whatever she did. And then, having the chance to do otherwise, perhaps she'd always love me! I'm sorry, really sorry, for you dependent women."

She nodded joy and appreciation.

"However," he said, resuming business, "you really want to get something done, I take it?"

"I do!"

"When?"

"This afternoon."

"You've really decided? I can't quite make up my mind as to whether you've made up yours. You're a new Miss Loftus to-day, you see."

"Not new, only camouflaged. Believe it."

"Very well. About this money, then—you've got to borrow?"

"There's no other way."

"A woman can't go to money lenders."

"Where's the difference between—"

"A woman and a man? Don't fly at my throat for suggesting a distinction! If a man likes to make a fool of himself with the Jews, let him; but it's always an instinct to stop a woman from making a fool of herself."

"And so?"

"Would you let me make you a loan?"

"You? But—a stranger—I couldn't trade upon your kindness——"

"No kindness, Miss Loftus. A business proposition. I should charge you six per cent, the ordinary rate for an arrangement of the sort. You'd better have five hundred pounds."

"Had I?" she asked meekly.

"That is my advice."

"I'll take it. You're very kind——"

"No, no," said Rutherford, fiddling with the pencil. "Fortune has been extraordinarily kind to me, and I'd like to offer the lady some accommodation, as it were—hand on the good turn, or some idea of that kind. Yes. My luck's in to-day."

He looked at her slowly, smiling. She just returned a congratulatory glance of inquiry.

"I'll tell you just how some time," he said, replying to it. "Shall we go now?"

"We? Go where?"

"To look at these premises. You'd better nail something as quickly as possible. There's such a housing shortage. Do you know what to do?"

"Not in the least."

"That's why I said 'we.' I should like to come with you."

"I can't trouble you like this."

"Miss Loftus—" said Rutherford, pausing. In a quiet voice he went on:

"I want to be with you."

She murmured, "Oh," and, "Very

kind," and, "Awfully good," with the particular pleasure of the woman who has occasion to murmur this particular kind of nonsense. She knew it was nonsense and hugged the knowledge to her. Her eyes were soft, bright, and delighted as she watched him take his hat and stick and give a farewell order to his head clerk:

"I'm out on business all the afternoon. Put clients through to Mr. Sexton." Turning to her he added, "My car's garaged near, and if you'll wait here a moment, I'll run her round."

Her eyes followed him till the door closed behind him.

She couldn't sit still. She walked about the room, looking at Rutherford's things. There were about half a dozen photographs, all of men save one. At this one she looked long and piercingly. It was the passionate face of a girl about her own age—a girl who had little academic beauty, but such a blend of languor and fire that through the indifferent portrait she made her power felt. Across one corner was dashed, in impetuous writing, "From Blanche. Thank you."

Rosa looked steadily at Blanche. She left her and returned again, and left her and yet again returned. She took the photograph in her hands, carried it to the window, and looked closer. Mysteriously, Blanche looked back.

"Thank you." Blanche also owed Rutherford gratitude, then.

The pleasure she had felt in the subtle flattery of his eagerness to help grew colder. It spoiled, moment by moment. She didn't analyze the change in her mind as she stood holding the portrait, but it was as if a chill fog had rolled up and obscured the spring sun that a minute before had poured upon her. Everything was a little less bright. And as she still stood there by the window, Rutherford came back so quietly that he stood beside her before she knew of his presence.

"Don't you think that's an interesting face?" he asked.

She burst out: "Oh, very! And—and she has lovely hair, hasn't she? I should think she's more than pretty; I should think she is quite beautiful! It isn't an English type exactly—"

He took the photograph from her and returned it leisurely to its place.

"No," he said, "she isn't English. She is, as you say, extremely attractive, an alluring type." He stood looking at the girl who remained in her sunlight, with her white-gloved hands folded on the handle of her sunshade. "I've brought the car round," he said.

"You're really immensely kind to me, Mr. Rutherford."

"No, for as I explained to you just now, Fortune has been so very good to me. Decent old girl! She had one of her very best surprises for me to-day. Do you know, I never thought it could possibly happen?"

"What?"

"This meeting. A hundred times, I've cursed my utter idiocy for losing you at Amiens before I'd asked if I might know your name and address. And now this wonderful thing has happened! Here you are! You walk in as if it were nothing extraordinary! Just wonderful!"

Rosa remained poised and calm, with her hands resting on her sunshade top. She smiled coolly.

"I'm afraid it is extraordinary, as you suggest."

"Not in that way! Not in that way, good heavens!" he cried impatiently. "It's extraordinary because it's a slice of luck that my stupidity didn't deserve. Do you know, do you realize, we might never have met again? Our lives might have been the poles apart!"

"You gave me your address."

"Never hoping you'd use it. No, I never hoped. But do you know, every day since I've been demobilized, I've wondered, 'Will she happen in to-day?'"

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And it hasn't been so very long, and she's happened in."

"I meant to come," said Rosa coolly.

"Blanche," she thought, "I wonder if she happens in, too?"

She dug at the carpet with the point of her sunshade.

"I couldn't know that," said Rutherford thoughtfully.

"But when I say a thing, Mr. Rutherford, I mean it."

"I couldn't know that, either."

"I—I—said I'd come, you see——"

"Yes, but——"

"But what?" she asked, digging at the carpet.

His eye followed the ferule of the sunshade.

"Well, that night——"

"N-n-night? Yes"

"When you were so cold and tired, poor girl! When you were so wet, so beat——"

"Yes. Yes?"

"When that hag of a car wouldn't start——"

"She was a perfect brute!"

"And when you thought you'd never get her going again, didn't you?"

"Yes, I was afraid I wouldn't."

"And when I came along on the bike——"

"I heard you coming and hoped it was salvation, I——"

"Well, and then when I——"

"You were awfully good."

"No! No! I mean when I——"

"I will not blush!" Rosa thought. She began to concentrate will power on keeping cool and brisk. "I wonder if I'm blushing," she thought.

"Well, I mean," said Rutherford, "I had an idea that perhaps, after that, you wouldn't look me up."

Rosa was cool. He had not mentioned the kiss. He had given it up. But he had surely thought about it, and so had she. She began to realize that sometimes a kiss—a particular kiss—is never forgotten. It never dies. It is being kissed till the end. She drew a little quick sigh.

"What?" cried Rutherford eagerly, watching her.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Rutherford?"

"You were going to say something."

"No; I had nothing to say."

She moved.

"Yes," he said, "of course. We must start on this important job of yours. The car's outside. We'll go first to Bond Street, and then to Portland Street, and then the Knightsbridge one. Shall we? Come along."

He opened the door, stood aside, and she passed out. And then, in the street doorway, she pulled up short, face to face with a girl who was entering in a hurry—a girl with a pale face, not a face of academic beauty, but one of compelling charm, with a web of dark hair over dark eyes under a French hat—Blanche, who had written, "Thank you."

For an instant Rosa stared at her. Then the other girl drew aside; Rosa passed her and stood on the curb by the waiting car. But behind her Rutherford had paused; she felt his pause. He exclaimed, "Blanche!" She heard it. Then he said:

"I'm so sorry! Just going out—but— Yes, this evening at seven."

Then he was near the car, behind Rosa. She felt him behind her.

He opened the door. She got in silently.

TO BE CONTINUED.



The Lady and the Genius

By Joseph Bernard Rethy



THE novel made an instant hit. All America was reading "The Portrait of Stella Glow." The sale of the book was tremendous. The publishers, amazed at the extraordinary demand, kept on turning out edition after edition. But always the demand was greater than the supply. Once in a generation only does the publishers' trade witness such an event. "The Portrait of Stella Glow" became a tidal wave, sweeping everything before its mighty progress, moving across the land with the speed of a typhoon, crossing frontiers, and penetrating far into Africa, Australia, England, and wherever the English tongue was read.

Ernest Morley, the creator of Stella Glow, awoke one morning, like Lord Byron, to discover that he was not only famous, but rich as well. To tell the truth, he was the most astonished person in the country. The success of his book amazed him. But it did not turn his head. He was now thirty-six years old. Due to a belated and unfortunate college career, he had not started to write until his twenty-third year. In 1915 a small volume of his poems had been published by a small out-of-town publisher who had considerable taste, but no money. Consequently the poems had not been pushed as they should have been. But among the few Americans who read poetry, it was understood that a new figure had quietly ascended Mount Parnassus. Those who read the "Song of the Scarlet

Host" were struck by a new point of view, by an almost Oriental intensity and passion, and by a lyric sweep that was at times overwhelming.

After the failure of his book of poems, Morley began to write "The Portrait of Stella Glow." It was an uncompromising story. The ending was decidedly unhappy. It violated the traditions of every big seller. It lacked all those things we inevitably find in the popular tale. It was not humorous. It was not sentimental. It pointed no moral. It condemned no one. The book was a study of the soul and life of Stella Glow, an ordinary type in the city of New York. The author had painted her with loving, but merciless fidelity. The background against which Stella stood forth so distinctly was that palpitating world of theaters and restaurants, of Broadway, that mobile world which no writer before Morley had portrayed so truthfully and with such consummate artistry. Notwithstanding these defects, the novel sold like the proverbial hot cake.

Four months after the publication of the work, Morley received a check for one hundred thousand dollars.

"At the rate the book is selling now," Mr. Kidder, his publisher, informed him, "you will be getting this amount every two months. I am inclined to believe the checks will be larger."

Morley, however, continued to lead the same simple life he had led before "Stella Glow" had made him a rich

man. He bought a few good pictures he had been yearning for these many years, some books, and added three rooms to his apartment on Sixty-ninth Street. He had always dressed well, for he was fastidious by nature.

The poet was a son of the city. He loved the streets and crowds of Manhattan. Not for him the silence of the trees and the shadows of the hills. Like Oscar Wilde, he was disappointed in nature. But he loved the sea. Most of his summers he spent at some beach, generally overcrowded and quite unpoetic, with its swarms of ugly people dressed in ill-fitting bathing suits. But he liked these places.

Toward the end of September, he rented a cottage in Atlantic City through a New York agent. Now he stood at the Pennsylvania Station waiting for his train. On the news stands "Stella Glow" occupied a conspicuous position. So did "Stella Glow" candies and cigars. When he got into the Pullman, he noticed about a dozen people reading his novel. The sight no longer thrilled him. He sat down wearily in his chair. The "Stella Glow" readers chewed gum, their jaws keeping time with the rhythm of their syncopated souls.

At the last minute a young woman came into the car and sat down in the seat in front of Morley. He glanced at her incuriously as the train moved out of the station and into the tunnel. Presently they roared into the light. Again his eyes swept across the woman in front of him.

Then he sat up, rigid and taut, as if an electric current had shot through his veins. An indescribable feeling of joy and elation made his whole body tremble. Not in five years had he been so thrilled. Not even the success of "Stella Glow" had made him so happy. For the unknown woman was reading his book—not "Stella Glow," the screaming success, but "The Song of

the Scarlet Host," his first book, the little volume of poems in which lay buried all the splendor and passion and joy and tragedy of his youth.

He had difficulty in repressing an exclamation of delight. His heart went out to this stranger who seemed so engrossed in his flaming verse. He leaned back in his chair and ravished her with his eyes. He thought how delightful were the freckles on her beautifully curved nose, and the sheen of her dark hair, and her hands, so strong and yet so pathetic in their shapely whiteness. Nothing about her escaped his probing eyes.

So intent was his gaze that the woman instinctively stirred in her chair. Then she looked up. For an instant a look of wonder flashed into her eyes; then, as if annoyed, she slowly swung her chair to the left, so that he could scarcely see her face. Once more she was absorbed in the book.

Her action did not abash Morley. He leaned over and touched her shoulder. She turned around with a quick gesture of surprise.

"Please forgive me," he said, quietly, eagerly, "for speaking to you. But I am so anxious to know how you happen to be reading that book."

Her first impulse was not to answer him, to maintain an attitude of annoyed aloofness. But, looking into his face, she divined his sincerity. A red flush suffused her cheeks.

"That's a very strange question to ask a stranger," she replied in a timid, self-conscious voice.

"I know it is," he admitted, "but it is stranger still that you should be reading that book."

"Why?" she demanded, with undisguised hostility.

"Because I thought I was the only one who had a copy of 'The Song of the Scarlet Host,'" he declared; and added, "I love that book."

Her eyes softened. A new interest

shone in them. The man before her was no longer an annoying masher.

"Do you really?" she exclaimed.

"I think Morley is a fine poet," the novelist blandly observed, "a very fine poet. I know the author of your verses."

A look of envious incredulity came into her face. She clutched the book and leaned over with charming eagerness.

"You know Ernest Morley?" she said in awestricken tones.

"Yes, I've known him for several years—in fact, for a very long time," the novelist confided to her.

"He must be a wonderful man," she said softly.

"He is," Morley agreed.

"But what sort of a man is he?" she queried. "I've read all that he has written. For years I've worshiped his art. I hope he isn't handsome."

"No, he isn't handsome," Morley assured her, "but he's rather interesting—fine face, you know, dark, with a rather noble brow and masses of black hair. Dresses well and speaks well, too. Strong, soft hands. His conversation is a mixture of nonsense and profundity. At times he can be very unjust and intolerant. At other times he is like an angel. Altogether, he is most unhappy."

"I know that," she said confidently.

"I'm glad he is not happy."

"Glad?" Morley laughed.

"Yes, glad," she repeated, without explaining why.

"What do you think of 'Stella Glow'?" Morley asked in an off-hand manner.

"I don't like her," the lady replied with a strange intensity. "I was one of the first to buy the book. When I read the original advertisement—long before it flooded the country—I bought a copy at once. It seemed wonderful then. But since everybody in America has read 'Stella Glow,' I hate her."

He smiled.

"You're jealous."

"Perhaps," she admitted, "if the novel had been a failure, I should have loved it. I love 'The Song of the Scarlet Host.' It is absolutely personal to me. When I read these poems, I feel as if the poet were addressing me alone. In his verses he speaks secretly to me. In 'Stella Glow' the secrets of his soul are bared to the whole world. Any base creature possessing one dollar and sixty cents can share the poet's deepest griefs. To me there is something vulgar in the mere idea of 'Stella Glow's' success."

He laughed.

"No—I think you are wrong. Most people who read the novel do not share the author's grief. In fact, most of 'Stella Glow' is above the heads of the public. They read the book for the story and not, as you did, for the spirit. The deep undercurrents which stirred you are absolutely unfelt by the 'Stella Glow' fans. If the book were really understood, Morley would be executed. The average reader delights in the vigorous, adventurous life of Stella—and of course in her love life."

"You are a good friend of his," she observed gratefully.

"That is because I understand him so well," Morley sententiously remarked.

"I envy you for that," she answered with a little sigh. "It was once the dearest wish of my life to meet him. I was so won by 'The Song of the Scarlet Host' that, had I met him anywhere and found him to be a hideous cripple, repulsive to the least fastidious of human beings, I should have loved him."

"And he would have returned that love," Morley encouragingly remarked. "I am sure of that."

There were a great many things about Ernest Morley that she wanted to know. Morley was astounded at her grasp of the poet's soul. She really knew him from having so thoroughly

gotten into the spirit of his verses. There was not a line she failed to understand. Vicariously she had suffered and rejoiced with him, now warming her soul in the sun and now searing it in the hells wherein he descended. Morley tried delicately to shift the subject into other channels. She always returned to the poet. Curiously enough, the novelist began to feel faintly the pangs of jealousy. Why the dickens, his ego asked, wasn't she interested in him? Suddenly he changed the subject.

"What is your name?" he bluntly demanded to know.

"Does that matter?" she parried.

"Very much," he replied.

"Muriel Drew," she answered simply.

"Muriel is a charming name," he observed critically, "but I don't care very much for Drew. My name is Walter Whiting."

"Whiting is a very nice name," she said to this, "but I don't care very much for Walter."

"Neither do I," he agreed, "but I try to make the best of it."

She laughed.

"Of all names, I like best the name of Ernest."

"Oh, hang Ernest!" Morley exclaimed petulantly. "After all, he's only a man. I'm astounded that such a sensible person as you seem to be should take so seriously some one whom you've never seen."

She laughed merrily.

The conversation shot out into by-paths which always returned, to the annoyance of the writer, to Ernest. The novelist, somewhat nettled by her steadfast loyalty to the poet, began delicately to tease her. With his usual skill in these matters, he managed to get under her skin, so to speak. Once, after he had neatly planted an arrow in her heart, she looked up at him with wondering, wounded eyes. Morley met her gaze unflinchingly. She lowered her

eyes, hurt in some inexplicable way. He had scored his first victory.

Presently they arrived in Atlantic City. When the train stopped, Morley bade her a curt good-by.

"One of these days, I'll call for you," he said, "and we'll take a long walk."

"Good-by, Mr. Whiting," she answered without further comment.

She took the Traymore bus. He got into a taxicab. When he reached the newly leased cottage, hitherto unseen by him, he liked the place at once. It was better than the agent's description. The house faced the ocean. The lawn was very green. Hedges acted for fences. Great oaks stood before the front porch, and geraniums bloomed brightly in the flower plots. Inside, an agreeable silence enveloped the house. The old caretaker was a colorless, quiet soul. She greeted Morley without any fuss. His trunks had already arrived and were installed in the star chamber on the first floor, facing the sea.

It was not too cold for a swim, he thought. So he hastily put on his bathing suit and walked out to the beach through a private tunnel that led from the house to the shore, passing beneath the boardwalk. The beach was deserted. The water was empty of humans. Morley felt a slight chill. Then he walked bravely into the water. After the first shock, he felt better and began swimming with easy strokes against the incoming tide. There, alone, in the kind arms of the sea, he experienced a peace that he could never recapture on land.

It was almost night when he got back to the cottage, his whole body tingling from the exercise. A good plain dinner awaited him. After his cigar he went into the library and began the second half of his new novel. He worked steadily until one o'clock. Then he retired. The sea winds blew in from the open window and soothed his tired heart.

The next day Morley worked steadily upon his novel, stopping only to take a swim in the late afternoon. After dinner he felt sad and depressed. He put aside his work and walked out on the deserted board walk. Hatless, his hair blown awry by the wind, he walked down the long promenade, talking to himself, occasionally passing some amused pedestrian who would stop and look back curiously at the absorbed author.

It occurred to him suddenly to fetch Muriel Drew for a long walk. He would stop at the Traymore and look for her. He could see the gigantic green roofs of her hotel. In the night, the great hostelrys fronting the board walk, shrouded in vast shadows, seemed fantastic and beautiful.

Arrived at the Traymore he walked briskly into the lobby and inquired at the desk for Mrs. Muriel Drew. Mrs. Drew was not in her room, he was presently informed. Should they page her? No, said Morley, moodily stalking off, annoyed that she should not be in. He strode onto the vast porch. There were hundreds of unoccupied chairs about him. Here and there in the twilight he could hear people conversing. He looked about eagerly, surprised at his keen disappointment in not finding Mrs. Drew. Then he sat down in a rocker, pitying himself, lonely, luxuriating in the depths of the blackest sort of pessimism.

When he had sunk to the lowest strata of despair, Muriel Drew walked past him in the gloom and sat down in a chair just a few feet away. She put her hands behind her head and gazed toward the Atlantic. Regiments and battalions of white breakers were marching upon the shore. They broke against the stone piers. Now and then the wind would lift the delicate foam and carry it inland, spattering very fine drops upon the loungers.

Morley saw her as in a dream. Then,

when he realized that it was really Muriel, his heart leaped for joy. He watched her for a space and then walked over to her.

"I've come to take you for a walk," he said quietly.

She was startled. At the sound of his voice, she lifted her head and dropped her hands.

"Good evening, Mr. Whiting," she said almost breathlessly. For a second he forgot the name he had given her, and was about to correct her when he remembered.

"Are you ready for a long walk?" he said.

"Yes," she answered, "I'm ready. But I had intended to retire early—to do some reading."

"I suppose you intended reading 'The Song of the Scarlet Host' again," he remarked.

"You are unkind," she said, "but I understand you. It is difficult for us to forgive genius in our friends."

"Epigrams don't impress me very much," he retorted. "I'm not at all swayed by a neatly turned sentence. That dictum of yours leaves me cold."

"You are frank," she conceded, "but no one could destroy my illusions about Ernest Morley."

"I can—Muriel," he said with bland confidence. "Come—let us go!"

She smiled at the thought that he should call her by her first name the second time they had met. But she promptly arose and walked out with him. It was characteristic of him that he never asked women what they wanted to do. He took charge immediately and took for granted that his program would be acceptable. This policy was greatly relished, as a rule. Women prefer to obey rather than to command. With his usual self-assurance, Morley took Muriel's arm and guided her up the wooden pathway. He was quite contented now. His depression had vanished. When he wished to, he could

be very charming. To-night, walking beside her in the keen, sea-blown air, a peace stole across his troubled heart.

Of course the topic of conversation was Morley. She wanted to know what he ate and drank, how he dressed, who were his friends, and who were his enemies. These questions amused him. Her obsession seemed so extraordinary, so steadfast. Presently he directed her down a long, cindery path, with many turns. On each side vine roses still grew on trellises. Going through a summerhouse, they found themselves in the grillroom of the Brighton. He ordered some Brighton punch. This concoction, he explained to Muriel, was one of the best drinks made in America. She had never before tasted it.

"What do you think of it?" he asked eagerly. He was very proud of that drink.

"It's bitter," she said.

He laughed.

"Bitter as true love."

"True love is bitter," she pensively agreed.

They had another punch. Then they resumed their walk.

They had quickly become good friends. A bond of sympathy knit them together. Almost unconsciously she put her arm in his as they walked along. He chatted gayly. His whimsical, quaint spirit charmed her. The punch, too, had got into her head and heart and warmed her soul. They walked on for several miles. He was a tireless walker. But she walked on beside him easily enough, striding gracefully in unison with his footsteps. By this time the long promenade was entirely deserted. When they reached his cottage, he stopped.

"Let us sit on the sand," he said, leading her down a short stairway.

The tide had begun to recede; the moon shone with a steady whiteness. They sat down on the cool sand in the shadow of a rowboat mounted on roll-

ers. Their hearts beat happily. For the first time, conversation lagged, then ceased entirely. He put his arm about her waist. The act was so inevitable, so natural, that she did not resist in the slightest degree.

Then he drew her toward him. Their lips met. In that breathless instant, they were united in a bond all eternity could not sever. For a wonderful moment they remained thus, while the waves of a towering passion surged through their veins. The first long kiss was over. She was dazed by the splendor of that moment. His whole being responded to the divine madness of it. The breakers now murmured faintly in the far distance. It was almost low tide.

Morley was the first to speak.

"That is my cottage," He indicated the house beyond the board walk. "Let us go in."

They stood up. Her hands clutched his. She offered no objection. Life had taught Morley some vital lessons. He understood the necessity of conquering at once—or never—or at a fearful price. She followed him unhesitatingly. Once inside he lit the large floor lamp in the library. A typewriter stood on a table. Beside it reposed a stack of typewritten pages.

"I forgot to mention that I, too, am a writer," Morley informed her with a smile. She had not asked what his profession was. "Of course I can't begin to compare with Morley—just an amateur, you know."

"You write, too!" she exclaimed. "What do you write?"

"Poems, plays that are never produced, and novels," he answered. "I'm writing a novel now."

"I've never read any of your works in the magazines," she said. "Walter Whiting is not a bad name for a writer. Of course it's not—"

"As noble as Ernest Morley," he put in. "I'm considered to be quite prom-

ising, nevertheless. Morley thinks that in time I'll be one of the very best artists in the country. What do you think of this chapter?"

He started to read a portion of his latest work. He read in a peculiar intense fashion. As he read on, he felt her eyes fixed lovingly upon his face. Suddenly he stopped reading, threw down the manuscript, and walked over to her.

"Hang literature!" he exclaimed. "A single instant of real life is worth all the books that have ever been written!"

Her face was pale. She did not answer him. Seated on the couch, she looked up with troubled, tender eyes. A fierce joy flowed through her. She held out her arms to him. He strained her to his heart with a strength that made her almost cry in pain. Then he kissed her with a devastating abandon that swept her upward in spirals of delight.

In all her life, Muriel had never conceived of a love so beautiful, so terrible. The reality was infinitely more thrilling than all the dreams she had ever dreamed of Ernest Morley. Nothing in all this world existed except the dark-eyed, dark-haired, fiery being in her arms. To her he seemed a god. In an instant, by the touch of his burning fingers, he had shattered her humdrum world and created for her another one, a world that flamed and sang and roared about her consciousness. In this world—for the first time in her life—she experienced a divine peace.

She kissed his mouth, his hair, his eyes, his hands. Tears stood in her eyes, tears of happiness and gratitude. It seemed now to her that she had known him since life itself began. He was as inevitable—as necessary to her scheme of existence—as the very air she breathed. Everything about him harmonized with her deepest desires. He was perfect, as far as she was con-

cerned, not in the rigid meaning of the word, but perfect as the sea is, as an old forest in a dim valley, as a poem by Edgar Allan Poe.

Upon Ernest Morley, Muriel exercised an astounding influence. For her he threw off the mask that had become so intensely a part of himself. This evening he was himself, natural, unaffected, like one who has never read a book, never possessed an idea, never been chained by inhibitions; in all his life he had never felt so free as now, while wholly and entirely hers. In the grip of their new and first real happiness, they lost track of time and space. They were like little children profoundly absorbed in a little world created by themselves; so absorbed that when the first gray waves of morning flooded the room, they could scarcely believe their eyes. Morley got up and hastened to the window.

"Muriel," he exclaimed exultantly, "look! It is morning!" Then, turning to her, he quoted some lines from Swinburne:

"Ask nothing more of me sweet.
All I can give you I give.

Heart of my heart, were it more,
More would be laid at your feet;
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar."

She listened enthralled.

"I ask nothing more," she said. "All that a man or even a god can give you have given. You have made me happy beyond the power of words to describe. If I were to die at this instant, I should have lived a richer life than any other woman."

"Do you know what I should love to do now?" he asked her, in that abrupt, eager way he had.

She shook her head.

"I should like to take a dip in the ocean. Come—we'll take a swim in the cold water," he laughed.

They ran out through the tunnel to the misty sands. The faint sun was

struggling to penetrate the morning fog. A chill wind blew from the east. She shivered. He felt cold. But with a mighty effort, they plunged into the water. After the initial shock, a delightful feeling of warmth rushed through their numbed bodies. In a few moments they came out glowing and tingling. Clasp hands, they ran back to the house. Seeing them run through the mist, one would have fancied oneself in a Greek grotto on the island of Lesbos in the days of Sappho. But Muriel and Morley were not thinking of Greece and Sappho. They were thinking only of themselves.

The seven days that followed were the happiest in their lives. Time flew with miraculous speed. Each moment seemed precious. Morley throughout the mornings and the early part of the afternoons, worked steadily away at his work. She would sit quietly in a chair pretending to read, but watching him hungrily while he typed. A tender light would fill her eyes, a tenderness that was half savage; she was a tigress watching her mate. Curiously enough, the closer she got to him, the more mysterious he seemed. At times she was certain that she had finally grasped his spirit. Then, unexpectedly, he would reveal a new phase of his character that would at once puzzle and delight her. His mastery over her was absolute. He knew every idea in her head. At times his clairvoyance would dismay her. What pleased her almost above everything else was his devotion to his work.

She read the pages of his new novel with amazement. She was astounded at the work, delighted at his ability to stalk through the labyrinth of the human soul with such assurance and authority.

"This book is going to be a wonderful work," she said to him once, "and you'll become a famous man."

"Of course I will," he replied.

"Why, I've already had twenty offers for it. It'll be reviewed very seriously wherever books are read. I expect to give Ernest Morley a run for his money."

"And then you'll forget all about Muriel Drew," she ruefully observed. "All the women will be after you. They'll spoil you as they must have spoiled Morley."

"Nonsense!" he declared. "Women never spoil men. Ernest Morley is not spoiled in the slightest. Neither shall I be."

"I'm disappointed only in one thing," she suddenly remarked.

"What is that?" he said sympathetically.

"You've never asked me about myself—what I am, where I came from. Since that first wonderful night, I've been waiting for you to question me. You know that I am a married woman. Aren't you interested in knowing the facts of my life?"

"I am indeed," he answered, "intensely interested. But I knew that when the time came, you would tell me."

"That is one of the secrets of your power," she said, "your terrible patience in these matters. You knew I would tell you, whether you asked me or not. No woman will ever beat you, Walter. Weak as you are in many things, here you are adamant. You know how to wait. We sense that we must come to you. That makes us impatient to be yours."

"The bitter experiences of life have taught me that," he explained. "I have had to pay heavily for my strength. The dullest man, for that reason, is happier than I am."

"There's nothing I could conceal from you," she wistfully said. "There are so many things I must tell you. How shall I live without you? To-morrow I must go to New York."

"To-morrow!" he exclaimed, shocked.

"Yes—to-morrow," she said. "I hate

to go, but I must. You have given me the only joy I have ever known. How well I know I shall be miserable without you! Each waking moment I shall think of you. All my dreams will be of you." I dread to think of the coming hours when my whole existence will be poisoned by my need and longing for you. But what I have already shared with you is so wonderful! I shall have the most splendid memories, Walter. Do you remember I once mocked your name? To-day it is the sweetest sound I know. And, strangely enough, I no longer dream of Morley. The reality has vanquished my illusion. To-day, when I think of Morley, it is as if I thought of Poe as Swinburne."

Ernest Morley smiled. His cup of happiness was filled. She had added the perfect touch to the gorgeous fabric of their love.

"I am twenty-five years old," she continued. "When I was twenty-one, Morley's book of poems affected me as no other influence possibly could. I cannot describe the extraordinary storm the verses produced in me. Every word that he said seemed to express my own deepest feelings. Without seeing the poet, I loved him with an intensity I would not have believed it possible for humans really to feel. In my mind I created a romantic figure of the author and loved that imaginary personality with unabated ardor—until I met you. Since I have known you, Morley has become but a memorable ghost. You have shattered the greatest illusion of my life."

A light of triumph gleamed in Morley's eyes. He smiled mysteriously, an elusive, charming smile that vexed and stirred her strangely.

"When I was twenty-one," she went on, "I was in love with a man I had never seen. And I was not a hero worshiper, a matinee girl, a silly child. I was strong and intellectual. But 'The Song of the Scarlet Host' swept me off

my feet. I then understood why the Duchess Amalia loved Goethe even before she met him. I was very simple in practical things. I actually intended to marry Morley. I thought of a thousand schemes to get in touch with him. All sorts of silly plans filtered through my brains. The absolute obscurity of the poet saved him. His name was not in the telephone book. His publisher was always out of town. Letters addressed to him always came back unanswered. Those that did not come back, he probably threw into the wastebasket. Finally I gave up the pursuit. I became contented with the spirit, with the dream, with the poems.

"And there was another man. Elihu Drew had pursued me for three years. He was most constant. The son of a rich manufacturer, he made himself richer still in order to impress me. I told him I did not love him. I explained my adoration for the poet. He only laughed. He said he was not afraid to compete with a man I had never met. He kept on doggedly. To show you my madness, I wrote to Morley explaining the situation. I wrote in my last letter to him that, unless he replied within ten days, I would marry Elihu Drew. It seems incredible that I should have done that, but I did. Of course he never answered that letter. I accepted Drew. We have been married now for four years. I have a lovely two-year-old boy.

"My husband knows that I do not love him. Sometimes I can't bear to be near him. Then I go off alone for a week or two—somewhere where I know no one and no one knows me. On these trips I always take 'The Song of the Scarlet Host' along and dream of the days that might have been had I met the man I loved in my girlhood. That is how I met you. You have done the impossible. You have made me betray the lover of my dreams. You have destroyed an illusion that was as

much a part of myself as my hands, my eyes, my heart. I am no longer the woman you met. Out of the ashes of the past you have recreated a new being, a being in whose heart there is room only for yourself. You have made me very happy, happier than you can imagine. The least little thing about you is more wonderful to me than anything I have ever known. Walter—even you—with all your wealth of imagination, cannot grasp the depth, the finality, the completeness of my love! Why don't you say something? You sit there so inscrutable!"

She ran her fingers through his hair and kissed his mouth. He remained motionless and silent, gazing at her with calm, steadfast eyes. But his heart beat happily. He felt as if he had wings.

"To-morrow I am going home," she said mournfully. "I must. If I stayed another day, my husband would come to fetch me. The memory of these delightful days will lighten my darkest hours. I shall write you often. Answer me sometimes, if only a line."

"Of course I shall," he answered her. "I am not Ernest Morley."

"There is another thing," she persisted. "It may be you do not love me. You have never said so. I don't care. I love you. Nothing else matters. Awake or asleep, you shall be in my arms. You are a great man, Walter, famous or not. Other women are going to love you. But never with that utter completeness that marks my love, a love that is more than love."

She stopped. Tears of anguish shone in her honest, deep eyes. He stroked her hair with his cool, long fingers and kissed her throat. He put his cheek next to hers and his arms about her waist. The peace that passeth understanding stole over them.

"Like Job," he said at last, "I am bewildered. Our love is 'too wonderful to understand.'"

Their last day together started gayly enough. It was too cold to go into the ocean, so they spent most of the time in the library. He put a log in the fireplace, and the bright glow of the fire cheered them for a little while. The first cold autumn day penetrated into their spirits. Nature was perishing, with all the charm of a beautiful dying young girl.

Muriel was going back on the eight o'clock train. They had dinner at the Brighton. The roses now bloomed but sparsely upon the trellises. Only two other guests sat in the dining room. A sense of sadness hovered over everything. The waiters seemed sad, the colored bell hops appeared as melancholy as negro princes in a play of Lord Dunsany's.

On the way to the station, they were silent. The depot was clamorous with busy folk hurrying back to the city. Muriel remained on the platform until the last second. Then, oblivious of the crowd, she drew him to her breast and kissed his mouth again and again. There was something terrible in that final intense embrace. All that was alive in her was summed up in that parting. She could not speak. Finally, with an effort, she tore herself away from him and, almost fainting, entered the car. The conductor, who had considerably waited, gave the signal. The train moved out of the station. Some of the passengers who had witnessed the passionate leave-taking looked at the beautiful woman curiously. An old woman sighed enviously.

On the Sunday morning following the homecoming of Muriel, Elihu Drew sat in his den, next to Muriel's boudoir. He was reading the *Times*. Casually he looked over the picture section. On the second page there was a large photograph of Ernest Morley. The note beneath stated that this was the only known photograph of the famous nov-

elist. And that was a fact. For Morley never gave interviews and never permitted his picture to be published. This strange streak of modesty in a personality so egotistic was at once the despair and the puzzle of his publisher. An enterprising camera man, however, unknown to Morley, had snapped the poet one afternoon while he had been walking bareheaded down the board walk in Atlantic City.

Mr. Drew knew that the picture would interest Muriel, so he took the sheet into her room. Muriel was still in bed.

"Here is your friend Morley," he exclaimed lightly, pointing to the portrait of the poet.

She took the page in her hand listlessly and glanced at it. Her face paled.

"My God!" she exclaimed. "That is Walter!"

"What's the matter?" Mr. Drew asked surprised, uncomprehending. "Are you disappointed?"

"No, dear," she replied quite calmly, "I am not disappointed. I think it's quite an interesting face."

"But not as interesting as you thought your hero would be," he persisted. He had always discussed Ernest Morley with her in a bantering way. The idea that anybody could take a poet seriously never occurred to him. He sat down beside her on the bed.

"I doubt if the picture does him justice," she answered. "Perhaps no picture could do him justice."

"You're still loyal," he laughingly conceded.

"Yes—loyal to him," she said, with a bitterness he failed to detect. "I told you when I married you that I should always remain faithful to Ernest Morley. I have kept my word."

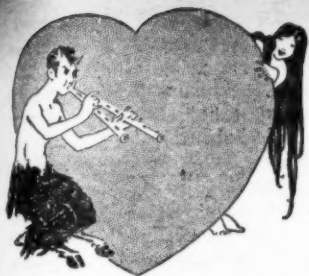


PETITION

YEA, of Thy mercy Lord this greatest boon;
I who have drunk Thy largess fair and free
Sue that Thou save me from Time's misery
That lays foul hands on beauty late or soon.
E'er the chill years my burning heart shall swoon,
Translate untouched to immortality
My lovely gauds—I pray Thee piteously
Who guarded them until my ripened noon!

Yea, let me come into Thy presence, Lord,
Sweet-fashioned, lithe of limb, with breasts adored,
Firm-muscle waist, strong, shining, milk-white thighs,
Lips like sweet foliage, and soft-colored eyes.
Yea, of Thy pity, Lord, save from Time's lust
Thy handiwork—hell is to turn to dust.

JEANNE ROBERT FOSTER.



Romany Hearts

By Louise Rice

Author of "The Never-Used Room," etc.

I.—The Lubbeny Kiss

FOR many hours the hot July sun had beaten down upon the upland meadows and the pine woods of the lower New Jersey hills. So, when the dew began to fall, there arose from them a heady brew, distilled from blossoming milkweed and fruiting wild raspberry canes and mountain laurel and dried pine needles.

The Princess Dora Parse took this perfume into her lusty young lungs and blew it out again in a long sigh, after which she bent her first finger over her thumb as one must when one returns what all Romanys know to be "the breath of God." She did this almost unconsciously, for all her faculties were busied in another matter.

The eyes of a gorgio, weakened by an indoor life, would never have been able to distinguish the small object for which the princess looked, for she was perched up on the high seat of the red Romany *wardo*, and she drove her two strong, shaggy horses with a free and careless hand. But to Dora Parse the blur of vague shadows gliding by each wheel was not vague at all. Suddenly she checked her horses and sprang down.

The patteran for which she was looking was laid beneath a clump of the flowering weed which the Romanys call "stars in the sky." The gorgios know it as Queen Ann's lace, and the farmers curse it by the name of the wild carrot. The patteran was like a miniature log cabin without a roof, and

across the top one large stick was laid, pointing upward along the mountain road.

Two brown and slender fingers on the big braid which dropped over her shoulder, the princess meditated, a shiver of fear running through her. What, she asked herself, could this mean? Why, for the first time in years, were the wagons to go to the farm of Jan Jacobus? Even if it were only a chance happening, it was a most unfortunate one, for young Jan, the fair-haired, giant son of old Jacobus, with his light blue eyes and his drawling, insolent speech, was the last person in the world that she wanted to see, especially with her man near.

For she had meant no harm. Many and many a time she had smiled into the eyes of men and felt pride in her power over them. Still—and yet—The princess scattered the patteran with her foot, for she knew that all the wagons must be ahead of her, since she had lagged so, and she leaped to her seat with one easy, lithe swing and drove on up the darkening road.

Jan Jacobus, like several other descendants of the Dutch settlers of New Jersey, held his upland farm on shares with John Lane's tribe of gypsies. Jacobus' and Bantas and Kopps, they made no bones about having business dealings with the tribe of English Romanys which had followed a regular route, twice a year, from Maryland to the upper part of New Jersey, since

before the beginning of the Revolutionary days. The descendants of the English settlers, the Hardys, the Lesters, the Vincents, and the Farrands, looked with still persisting English reserve upon the roamers of the woods and would have no traffic with them, though a good many of their sons and daughters had to know the few Romany young people who were left, by twos and threes in the towns for occasional years of schooling.

The tribe, trading in land in the two States which they frequented, and breeding horses, was very rich, but not very many people knew that. However, they were conceded to be shrewd bargainers, and when old John bought Martin Debbins' upland and rocky farm, one year, with the money that he had made by a lucky purchase of a gangling colt whose owner had failed rightly to appraise its possibilities as a racer, Boonton and Dover and Morristown laughed.

"*Sal* away," old John retorted pleasantly to the cashier of the bank in Boonton, where the tribe had deposited its surplus funds for many years," but you won't *sal* so much when you *dik* what I will make out of that joke."

The cashier thereupon looked thoughtful. It might well be that he and others would not laugh when they saw good fortune which might have been theirs following this genial old outlaw.

That summer the wagons camped on the Debbins place, and old John stocked it with a lot of fine hogs, for which the land was especially adapted. They fattened on the many acres, wooded with wild nut trees, and Jacobus—as keen a bargainer as any Romany, upon whom John Lane had had his eye all the time—took the farm on shares, and every year thereafter the cashier at the bank added a neat little total to the big balance which the tribe was rolling up.

And every year, as the wagons beat up toward Dover in July, old John would drive on ahead and spend a night of mingled business and pleasure with old Jan, reckoning up the profits on the Berkshires for which the farm was now famous, and putting down big mugs of the "black drink" for which Aunt Alice Lee, John Lane's ancient cousin, was equally famous. The amount of this fiery and head-splitting liquor which the two old men thus got away with was afterward gleefully recounted in the wagons and fearfully whispered of in the little Dutch church at Horse's Neck which the Jacobuses had attended for over a hundred years.

But never, as wagon after wagon had gone up the turning that led to the upward farm, had there been a patteran pointing that way. Always, it had shown the way onward and downward, to the little hamlet of Rockaway, where there was an old and friendly camping place, back of the blacksmith shop beyond the church. Old John never encouraged the wagons to visit any of the properties held by the tribe.

"Silver blackens the salt of friendship," he would say.

Dora Parse was driving her own *wardo*, a very fine one which had belonged to her mother. Lester Montague, of Sea Tack, Maryland, who makes the wagons of Romanys for all the Atlantic coast tribes, like his father before him, had done an especially good job of it. The princess had been certified, by the Romany rites, to old John's eldest son, George, for she had flatly refused to be married according to the gorgio ways. Not having been married a full year, he was not yet entitled to carry the heavy, silver-topped stick which is the badge of the married man, nor could he demand a place in his wife's tent or wagon unless she expressly invited him. Dora Parse and George Lane were passionately in love with each other, and their meeting and

mating had been the flowering romance of the tribe, the previous summer.

The princess, being descended from a very old Romany family, as her name showed, was far higher in rank than any one in the Lane tribe. Her aristocratic lineage showed in the set of her magnificent head, in the small, delicate fingers of her hand, and in the fire and richness of her eyes. Also, her skin was of the color of old ivory upon which is cast a distant, faint reflection of the sunset, and her mouth, thinner than those of most Romanys, was of the color of a ripe pomegranate.

"*A rauni, a puro rauni*," all the tribes of the eastern coast murmured respectfully, when Dora Parse's name was mentioned.

She was, indeed, a very great lady, but she was also a flirtatious and headstrong girl. She was one of the few modern gypsies who still hold to the unadulterated worship of "those." All the members of John Lane's tribe were Methodists—had been since before they had migrated from England. In every wagon, save Dora's, a large illustrated Bible lay on a little table, and those who could, read them aloud to the rest of a Sunday afternoon. This did not mean, however, that the Romanys had descended to gorgio ways, or that they had wholly left off their attentions to "those." They combined the two. Old John was known as a fervent and eloquent leader in prayer at the Wednesday-night prayer meetings in the Maryland town where his church membership was held, but he had not ceased to carry the "box of meanings," as befitted the chief of the tribe.

This was a very beautifully worked box of pure gold, made by the great Nikola of Budapest, whose boxes can be found inside the shirt of every gypsy chief, where they are always carried. In them are some grains of wheat, garnered by moonlight, a peacock's feather,

and a small silver bell with a coiled snake for a handle. When anything is to be decided, a few of the grains are taken out and counted. If they are even, the omen is bad, but if they are odd, all is well. Old John had an elastic and accommodating mind, like all Romanys, so he never thought it strange that he should ask the "box of meanings" whether or not it was going to storm on prayer-meeting nights.

Dora Parse thought of the box now, and wished that she might have the peacock's feather for a minute, so that her uneasy sense of impending bad luck would leave her. Then she stopped beside a cross-barred gate where an old man was evidently waiting for her.

"Lane was gettin' troubled about yuh," he said, as he turned the horses and peered curiously up at her. He knew who she was, not only because John Lane had said who it was who was late, but because Dora Parse's appearance was well known to the whole countryside. She was the only member of the tribe who kept to the full Romany dress. There were big gold loops in her small ears, and on her arms, many gold bracelets, whose lightness testified to their freedom from alloy. Her skirt was of red, heavily embroidered in blue, and her waist, with short sleeves, was of sheer white cloth, with an embroidered bolero. Her hair she wore in the ancient fashion, in two braids on either side of her face. She could well afford to, the chis muttered among themselves. Any girl with hair like that—

There was a long lane leading to the barns and to the meadow back of them, and there, said Jan, the tribe was to camp. As the princess drove along the short distance, she swiftly snatched off her little bolero, put it on wrong side out, and then snatched it off and righted it. That much, at least, she could do to avert ill luck. And her heart bounded as she drove in among the

other wagons, for her husband came running to meet her and held out his arms.

She dropped into them and laid each finger tip, delicately, in succession, upon his eyes and his ears and his mouth, the seal of a betrothal and the sign whereby a Romany chal may know that a chi intends to accept him when he speaks for her before the tribe; a sign that lovers repeat as a sacred and intimate caress. She leaned, hard, into his arms, and he held her, pressing the tender, confidential kiss that is given to children behind her little ear.

Dora Parse suddenly ran both hands through his thick hair and gave it a little pull. She always did that when her spirits rose. Then she turned and looked at the scene, and at once she knew that there was to be some special occasion. Aunt Alice Lee was seated by a cooking fire, on which stood the enormous iron pot in which the "big meals" were prepared, when the tribe was to eat together and not in separate groups, as it usually did. There were some boards laid on wooden horses, and Pyramus Lee, aunty's grandson, was bringing blocks of wood from the woodshed for seats. Dora Parse clapped her hands with delight and looked at her man.

"Tetch!" she exclaimed, approvingly, using the word that spells all degrees of satisfaction. "And what is it for, stickless one? Is it a talk over silver?"

"Yes, it is some business," George Lane replied, "but first there will be a *gillie shoon*."

A *gillie shoon* has its counterpart in the English word "singsong," as it is beginning to be used now, with this exception: Romanies have few "fixed" songs. They have strains which are set, which every one knows, but a *gillie shoon* means that the performers improvise continually; and in this sense it is a mystic ceremony, never held at

an appointed time, except a "time of Mul-cerus," which really means a sort of religious wave of feeling, which strikes tribe after tribe, usually in the spring.

"Marda has come back," Aunt Lee called out to Dora Parse. No one ever called her by her full name of Marda Lee, because she was a Lee only by courtesy, having been adopted from a distant wagon when both her parents were killed in a thunderstorm. Marda, wearing the trim tailored skirt and waist that were her usual costume, was putting the big red tablecloth of the "big meals" on the boards. Dora went quickly toward the young girl and embraced her.

"How is our little scholar?" she asked affectionately.

"I am very well, Dora Parse, but a little tired," Marda answered.

"And did you receive another paper?"

"Yes. I passed my exams. It will save me half a year in Dover."

"That is good," Dora Parse replied, although she had only the dimmest idea of what Marda meant. The young girl knew that. She had just come from taking a special course in Columbia, and she was feeling the breach between herself and her people to be especially wide. Because of that, perhaps, she also felt more loving toward all of them than she ever had, and especially toward Dora, about whom she knew something that was most alarming. Dora Parse noted the pale, grave face of her favorite friend with concern.

"Smile, bird of my heart," she entreated, "for we are to have a *gillie shoon*. Sit near me, that I may follow your heaven voice."

There was no flattery meant. The Romanys call the soprano "the heaven voice," the tenor "the sky voice," the contralto "the earth voice," and the basso "the sea voice." Dora had a

really wonderful earth voice, almost as wonderful as Marda's heaven voice, which would have been remarkable even among opera singers, and the two were known everywhere for their improvisations. In answer to the remark of the princess, Marda gave her a strange look and said:

"I shall be near you Dora Parse. Do not forget."

Her manner was certainly peculiar, the princess thought, as she walked away. But then one never knew what Marda was thinking about. Her great education set her apart from others. Any chi who habitually read herself to sleep over those most *puro libros*, "The Works of William Shakespeare, in Eight Volumes, Complete, with Glossary and Appendix," must not be judged by ordinary standards. The princess knew the full title of those *puro libros*, having painfully spelled it out, all one rainy afternoon, in Marda's mother's wagon, with repeated assistance and explanations from Marda, which had left the princess with a headache.

Now Aunt Lee took off the heavy iron cover of the pot and the odor of Romany duck stew, than which there is nothing in the world more appetizing, mingled with the sweet fragrance of the drying hay. Aunt Lee thrust a fork as long as a poker into the bubbling mass and then gave the call that brings the tribe in a hurry.

"Empo!" she cried in her shrill, cracked voice. "Empo! Empo!"

Laughing, teasing, jostling, talking, they all came, spilling out from the wagons, running from the barn, sauntering in, the lovers, by twos, and sat down before the plates heaped high with the duck and the vegetables with which it was cooked and the big loaves of Italian bread which the Romanys like and always buy as they pass through towns where there are Italian bakeries.

But they sat quiet then, and each one looked toward the princess, as politeness demanded, since she was the highest in rank among them.

She drew a sliver of meat from her plate and tossed it over her shoulder.

"To the great *ré*," she said.

"To the *shule*," each one murmured. Then, having paid their compliments to the sun and the moon, as all good Romanys must before eating, they fell to with heartiness.

When they were through, the mothers and the old men cleared away the tables and put the younger children to bed in the wagons, and the princess and George Lane and Marda and young Adam Lane, George's youngest brother, walked up and down, outside the glow from the cooking fire, taking the deep, full breaths which cleanse the mouth and prepare the soul for the ecstasy of song.

The men took away the table and the lanterns which had been standing about, and put out the cooking fire, for the big moon was rolling up over the treetops, and Romanys sing by her light alone, if they can. Frogs were calling in the shallow stretches of the Upper Rockaway. People began to sit down in a big circle.

Then Marda started the *gillie shoon*. At first you could not have been sure whether the sound was far or near, for she "covered" her tones, in a way that many a gorgio gives years and much silver to learn. Then the wonderful tone swelled out, as if an organ stop were being pulled open, and one by one, the four leaders cast in the dropping notes which followed and sustained the theme that Marda was weaving:

"Lal—la—ai—lala—lalu! Ai—l-a-a—lalu!"

Old John, who had not appeared before, slid into the circle, holding by the sleeve a giant of a man who seemed to come half unwillingly. Dora Parse

saw him, and she could not repress the shiver that ran through her at the sight of young Jan Jacobus, yet she sang on. The deep, majestic basses throbbed out the foundation of the great, fuguelike chorus, and the sopranos soared and soared until they were singing falsetto, according to gorgio standards, only it sounded like the sweetly piercing high notes of violins, and the tenors and contraltos wove a garland of glancing melody between the two. They were all singing now. Rocking back and forth a little, swaying gently from side to side, lovers clasped together, mothers in their young sons' arms, and fathers clasping their daughters, they sent out to the velvet arch above them the heart cry of a race, proud and humble, cleanly voluptuous, strong and cruel, passionate and loving, elemental like the north wind and subtle as the fragrance of the poppy.

"Ai—lallu! Ai—lala—lala! Ai—lallu!"

Jan Jacobus sat with his big jaw dropping. Stupid boor that he was, he could not have explained the terrifying effect which this wild music and those tense, uplifting faces had upon him, but he would have given anything to be back in his mother's kitchen, with the lamp lit and the dark, unfamiliar night shut out.

As suddenly as the singing had begun, it stopped. People coughed, moved a little, whispered to one another. Then George Lane stood upon his feet, pulling Dora Parse with him.

"You see her?" he asked them all, holding out his wife in his arms.

Dora Parse knew then, for he was beginning the ritual of the man or woman who accuses a partner, before the tribe, of unfaithfulness. He was using the most *puro* Romany *jib*, for only so can the serious affairs of the tribe tribunal be conducted. Dora

Parse struggled in the strong hands of her man.

"No! No!" she cried. "No—no!"

"You see her?" George Lane repeated to the circle.

"We see her," they answered in a murmur that ran around from end to end.

"She is mine?"

"She is yours."

"What shall be done to her if she has lost the spirit of our love?"

Again Dora Parse furiously struggled, but George Lane held her.

"What shall be done with her? If that is so?"

Aunt Lee, as the oldest woman present, now took up the replies, as was her right and duty:

"Let her go to that other, if she wishes, and do you close your tent and your wagon against her."

"And if she does not wish?"

"Then punish her."

"What shall be done to the man?"

"Is he a Romany?"

"No."

Jan Jacobus half started up, but strong hands instantly jerked him down.

"He is a gorgio?"

"Yes."

"Do nothing. We do not soil our hands with gorgios. Let the woman bear the blame. She is a Romany. She should have known better. She is a woman, the wiser sex. It is her fault. Let her be punished."

"Do you all say so?" George Lane demanded.

"We say so." Again the rippling murmur.

Jan Jacobus made a desperate attempt to get on his feet, but, for all his strength, he might as well have tried to uncoil the folds of a great snake as to unbind the many hands that held him, for the Romanys have as many secret ways of restraining a person as the Japanese.

George Lane drew his wife tenderly close to him.

"She shall be punished," he said, "but first she shall hear, before you all, that I love her and that I know she has not lost the spirit of our love. Her fault was born of lightness of heart and vanity, not of evil."

"What is her fault? Name it," commanded Aunty Lee.

George Lane looked over at Jan.

"Her fault is that she trusted a gorgio to understand the ways of a Romany. For our girls have the spirit of love in their eyes, but no man among us would kiss a girl unless he received the sign from her. But the gorgio men are without honor. To-day, as this woman who is mine stopped to talk with a gorgio, among some trees where I waited, thinking to enter her wagon there, he kissed her, and she kissed him, in return."

"Not with the *lubbenny* kiss—not with that kiss!" Dora Parse cried. "May I be lost as Pharaoh was in the sea if I speak not the t-uth!"

The solemn oath, never taken by any Romany lightly and never falsely sworn to, rang out on the still night air. A cold, but firm little hand was slipped into Dora Parse's. Marda was near, as she had promised, and the hot palm of the princess closed gratefully upon it.

George Lane drew his wife upon his breast, and over her glossy head he looked for encouragement to Aunty Lee, who knew what he must do. He was very pale, but he did not hesitate.

"Kiss me, my love," he said, loudly and clearly, "here before my people, that I may punish you. Give me the kiss of love, when tongues and lips meet, that you may know your fault."

Now Dora Parse grew very pale, too,

and she leaned far back against her man's arms, her eyes wide with terror. And no one spoke, for in all the history of the tribe this thing had never happened before, though every one had heard of it. Dora Parse knew that, if she refused, her oath would be considered false, and that she would be cast out, not only from her husband's tent and wagon, but from all Romany tribes. And slowly she leaned forward, and George Lane bent down.

Jan Jacobus, although he had not understood the words of the ritual, thought he knew what had happened. The gypsy fool was forgiving his pretty wife. The young Dutchman settled back on his haunches, suddenly aware that he was no longer held. And then, with all the others, he sprang to his feet, for Dora Parse was hanging in her husband's arms, with blood pouring from her mouth, and George Lane was sobbing aloud as he called her name.

"What—what—what happened?" Jan stammered. "Gawd—did he kill her?"

Old John Lane, his serene face unruffled, turned the bewildered and frightened boy toward the lane and spoke, in the silky, incisive tones which were half of his enchanting charm.

"Nothing much has happened. One of our girls allowed a gorgio to kiss her, so her man bit off the tip of her tongue. It is not necessary, often, to do it, but it is not a serious matter. It will soon heal. She will be able to talk—a little. It is really nothing, but I thought you might like to see it. It is seldom that gorgios are allowed to see a thing like that.

"Please say to your father that I will spend the evening as usual with him. My people will pass on."

(Next month Louise Rice will tell another American gypsy story.)



The End of a Perfect Jay

By Jessie E. Henderson and
Henry J. Buxton

Authors of "Wanted: a Blemish,"
"A Hundred Little Doors," etc.

IT is probable that poison ivy has no special grudge against the world, but every one knows what happens when poison ivy starts out to make the world a prettier place to live in. The more vigorous its efforts toward neighborliness, the more standoffish the world becomes. There's some mysterious curse on the friendly, rambling vine, so that wherever it intrudes, it spoils the picnic.

Joe Sadwether was the human poison ivy. To the casual eye, he seemed no whit more deadly than the common run of rich men's heirs. You would single him out, indeed, for a certain ingenuous quality, fresh as the gloss on an ivy leaf, which invited your confidence and, when you leaned on it—stung you. With the best intentions in the world, Joe would put forth luxuriant sprays of activity in this direction and in that; but the sum of his efforts was a slowly swelling blister on the hands of his friends. Much of the fault belonged to Joe's father. That financially prosperous and socially ambitious gentleman made the mistake of trying to raise his poison ivy in a hothouse instead of allowing it to roam the wilds where, if the intruder got stung, the fault was in a measure his own.

In short, the shame and grief of the elder Sadwether's career was the fact that his only child wanted to be a naturalist instead of a millionaire, a cultivator of snails instead of society. Bugs, not business; reptiles, not realty;

butterflies actual, not butterflies social; cooties, not cotillions—these were the things that engrossed the soul of the fat, good natured, serious young man. Now that Sadwether senior had cornered the real-estate market and learned to distinguish an *hors d'œuvre* from an orchid, now that Mrs. Sadwether senior had stopped being scared of the butler and was learning to smoke cigarettes, it did seem hard that Joe should act so bourgeois. In their own minds, the broken-hearted parents looked on him as a tragic reversion to type—a kick—back to grandpapa, who in other days and, thank Heaven, in other localities, had been—but hush!—a garbage collector. Whatever the reason, Joe as a financial leader and social light proved a total loss.

What a round peg is to the square hole, what the poison ivy is to the picnic, what, as grandpapa would crudely have said, the skunk is to the May party, so was Joe to any social or business gathering. When, therefore, a mottled green snake poured itself across the polished floor at a directors' meeting of the Strandmere Realty Development Corporation and flickered brightly toward the shoe tips of T. Farnsworth Murray, there was only one possible culprit.

Joe lunged after his pet, gathered it up by handfuls, and restored it to his pocket.

"Twon't hurt you," he reassured, as T. Farnsworth Murray climbed down

from a desk. "Beauty, isn't she?" His mild brown eyes kindled.

But the gray eyes of Sadwether senior, mild by no means, kindled also. In some book on "Good Manners, Culture, and Dress" he had read that one must not bawl out one's family in public. Yet when a man's son humiliates him in the very presence of the spruce young fellow whom he wants his son to imitate, the occasion is among those calamities not covered by a book on etiquette. In a flaming glance, Sadwether senior, took note of Murray's immaculate clothes, creased to knife-blade sharpness, a bit of lavender silk sock peeping forth here to harmonize with a bit of lavender silk handkerchief peeping forth there. His eye blazed on the slouchy figure of Joe, whose clothes always bulged on his rotund frame like a cascade of meal sacks, whose shoes were always drab with dust, whose hands were grimy with groping among tree roots, whose rosy, round face held a cherubic simplicity of expression unbefitting the son of the shrewdest real-estate gambler—yes, and the richest—in five counties.

Then Sadwether, senior, found voice. He dragged skeleton after skeleton from Joe's bugologist past and flung them rattling into his son's embarrassed features. The time when, hoping against hope that the boy would grow into a normal business man, the father had bought him a toy set of office furniture. To what use, demanded Sadwether, senior, in passionate grief, when next day the little filing cabinet had been crammed with turtle eggs, while every drawer in the little desk had overflowed with toads. The time when Joe had gone to Mrs. Frothingham's tea and, in reaching for a handkerchief, had spilled a nest of field mice into the cake dish. The time upon time when Joe had blunderingly loosed his pets in church, at marriages, and funerals.

Murray listened in scornful and superior amusement, as an indulgent young baron might heed the wrangles of the peasantry. Yet not indulgence so much as indigence prompted him to be attentive. Soon after the Sadwethers had migrated to Harbin City a year before on the heels of a tidy financial coup, Murray had begun to cultivate Sadwether, senior, as eagerly as Sadwether, senior, cultivated Murray. For Murray wanted money, Sadwether wanted social prestige. Murray revered Old Man Sadwether for the devilish shrewdness that kept within the law, pitied him for his outlandish son, and joined partnership with him for the sake of mutual benefit. It had been an excellent arrangement all round.

Joe crumpled before the withering blast of rage. A gentle, awkward young man, he had a horror of scenes and a wholesome dread of the lightnings that flashed from his father's eyes. Scarlet, he shuffled from one huge foot to the other, stammering now and then the fragment of an excuse.

It was Murray who finally came to his rescue.

"Joe isn't keen on administrative matters," he stated lazily, as one who makes a discovery. "Why not let him catch snakes round the Crompton place? She'd never take him for anything but a—a— She wouldn't think he was a detective. And if he could talk her into selling out—disinterested advice and all that sort of thing—"

Sadwether, senior, accordingly gave Joe his last chance. Sadwether emphasized the lastness of it. If Joe made good in the Crompton thing, all right. If he fell down on it, let him get a job of his own, for his allowance would stop so quick it'd make his head swim. And then where would he be? Hey?

Joe considered this question with great seriousness a few days later, while sauntering down the wide, empty beach

at Strandmere. Where, indeed, would he be if dad stopped his allowance? Trusting to the parental income and generosity, Joe had neglected to fit himself for anything more lucrative than the life of a tramp who was only a semiscientific naturalist. He loved nature on the hoof, as it were; none of your dissecting, your prying or dismembering for him. All he wanted was money enough to get butterfly nets, specimen boxes, three—or, better, four—very square meals every day, knock-about clothes, and a pair of shoes plenty wide enough. That's all he wanted—and to be let alone. A job would interfere dreadfully with his happiness. Like every self-respecting human being, he hated work.

To placate dad, of whom he stood always in awe, and to perpetuate his allowance, of which he stood always in admiration, formed Joe's big ambition at the moment. It was why he happened to be strolling the loveliest bit of shore along the Jersey coast, an appreciative eye on its tumbling dunes, crowned by deep, coarse grass and cleft now and then by a tongue of green where the first wild roses perfumed the blithe sea air. An indolent surf gathered offshore, swelled from a crinkle to a billow, from a billow to a bursting arch, and crashed on the sand with a dull, pleasant noise at long intervals.

This was Strandmere, eh? In a vague way Joe had known about the three-mile strip of smooth beach, with its adjacent inland acres of rose-and-bayberry moorland, which dad's development corporation had purchased twelve months before. Cottages had risen forthwith to desecrate the face of nature. Joe could see a small village of them as he rounded a furrowed dune. That abomination of abominations, a seashore hotel, had been thrust into their midst. Its flaunting yellow-painted verandas struck across Joe's

sensibilities like a bad word in a cathedral. But the development corporation stood to make a couple of million dollars just by taming this three-mile stretch of country.

The corporation was going to fill the cottages with nature lovers who would strew a carpet of popcorn papers and peanut shells on the sand. It was going to cram the hotel with people who felt the lure of the sea to such an extent that they would demand movies instead of moors, and a roller-coaster where the biggest dune stood now. By that time there would be a board walk flanked by shops and theaters and palmists' parlors. The wildness of nature would be so far conquered that, if you glanced toward the ocean you would find a screen of piers with corset advertisements and talcum-powder pictures interposing decently between your gaze and the naked waves. An enlightened people would soon hail Strandmere as a greater Atlantic City, conjured out of nothing but an untidy tangle of wildflowers and surf, trimmed to a neat checkerboard of streets, and improved into the typical Jersey resort. "Swell" had been the adjective dad had used.

Winning a trifle at the share he must play in this laudable enterprise, Joe edged toward the moorland at a point just between the yellow hotel and its cottage satellites. A flutter of house-keeping round the cottages indicated the arrival of a few early residents, while a fury of activity at each corner of the hotel hinted at the grand opening that impended.

At one end of the hotel grounds, where the concrete walk should run from the bathhouses to the water, or where a snappy cement garage might properly stand, there nestled a widespread old farmhouse, silver-gray from weathering and screened almost to its roof in clouds of delicate purple lilacs. Half a dozen shades of green made the

place a blessing to the glance dazzled by sunlit ocean—somber agate tints of scrub pine, dull olive of shrubbery, sturdy emerald of the young things springing up in the twisted flower beds, and a gauzy hint of jade where moss had touched the ridgepole. Crisp white curtains hung in windows polished like diamonds, and a huge brass knocker gleamed on the door.

But these attractive qualities came to you only upon your third glance. Your first glance and your second saw nothing beyond two long, raw, new unpainted board fences, high as the eaves, which started at the beach front and ran alongside the house until they converged in a sharp angle some hundred feet to its rear. They cut off all view to right and left up and down the beach, as well as all view behind across the tumbled moors. They hemmed in the silver-gray house as prison walls hem a mutineer in "solitary." They shut out two thirds of the sunlight, and three thirds of the summer-boarder prospects. Spite fences were these, the punishment which a development corporation found it necessary to impose on Theresa Crompton when that young woman refused—aye, and with contumely—to sell her homestead for any sum which the senior Sadwether considered within reason.

Not without misgiving did Joe approach the house. He had "snooped"—the word was T. Farnsworth Murray's—for three days now, but always his courage had oozed as the Crompton place had come into view. He stood, like the homestead itself, between the devil and the deep sea. Joe feared women much, but he feared dad more. While he scuffed the sand, miserable in indecision, a butterfly lovely as a flake of sunset floated past his nose. Tugging at the pocket that held his bugologist kit, he started in pursuit. Up the beach, down the beach, over a dune, through a bayberry thicket—

The wisp of color seemed to take conscious delight in leading him on. It drifted to the Crompton lilacs. It sailed serenely up the fragrant alley of the path. It lured him round a corner of the house where a girl with red hair stood looking at the fence.

In her sea-blue eyes burned a despair too keen for tears, but all she said was: "Get out of here!"

"B-but—" Joe replied, not brilliantly. He raised his perspiring face to the breath of breeze, fanning himself with a disreputable old hat. A magenta tinge overlaid the pink of his cheeks, and his breath came in gasps. Joe was really a bit too plump to gallop after butterflies on a warmish day.

"I don't want any clams this morning," said the red-haired girl.

Joe gave her his ingenuous smile.

"It—it wasn't chasing clams that got me so hot," he explained. Evidently she had seen him digging at low tide, a circumstance that saved a lot of lying—at which he wasn't expert.

"Any other season," the girl went on—she had a remarkable creamy skin lightly powdered with golden freckles—"I'd have bought lots of clams from you. For the boarders. But this year—" Her melancholy eyes searched the fence again.

"Whatever did you put up a fence like that for?" inquired Joe with guile.

"Me?" she cried in mingled grief and anger. "Am I crazy?"

After that it proved easy enough to draw her out. Joe crimsoned at the story, though the red-haired girl made no bid for sympathy.

It seemed to be much the same old tale of the trustful orphan and the awful trust. For decades the Cromptons had lived there, getting a moderate income by farming of both kinds—acres and boarders. Along had come the development corporation, cast a covetous claw toward the Crompton land, and induced the lone young

woman to sell most of her inheritance at a price which, in the light of later events had proved criminally low. Soon realizing her error, she had realized also that the corporation had overlooked one important item—the homestead occupied the very triangle where the hotel needed a bathhouse or a garage. She was holding out for a fat sum. Meanwhile, the corporation was, as its legal advisers would say, "taking steps."

"I'll make them cover those fences with gold pieces!" she flamed.

Joe visualized her large, shapely hands ironing and baking and washing, performing the manifold labors involved in "keeping boarders." He noted the neat blue gingham dress, faded but trim, the stubby shoes polished till they almost lost their suggestion of age. A good, clean, hard-working young woman was this, who had been decidedly up against it in the best of times and who appeared likely to starve now before making good her gallant threat. The slow color deepened in Joe's face. He felt more than a little ashamed of dad.

As for the girl, her skin flushed to a wild-rose of indignation. What she thought of Old Man Sadwether was a-plenty, and she mentioned all of it. Joe hoped that dad's ears tingled as much as his own. Abruptly she stopped in the midst of a magnificent denunciation.

"But never mind my worries." She vouchsafed a brief, brave smile. "You look hot. Wait."

She returned with a thing in her hand which in any other hand would have been a glass of water. As it was, the stuff proved to be nectar, liquid crystal—what you will. Joe quivered as he accepted the goblet. At that instant a ball of gray fluff skipped from his pocket, ran up his arm, nudged the glass inquiringly, and proved to be a squirrel.

"Lucien," Joe grinned, and offered his pet a drink.

"Oh, eetums tweetums!" replied Theresa, most surprisingly for such a brisk young person. "Izzum didums? Mudder's pie! O-ooh—tunnin' fing!"

"Yeah," Joe admitted.

He put Lucien through all his delightful tricks, and threw Theresa into an ecstasy of admiration and laughter. Then he explained about the butterfly, which long ago had fluttered over the fence and vanished. He didn't want her to think he had strolled into her yard for a hand-out.

"Well, if you're interested in bugs," Theresa commented, "there's an awful funny new one round here."

She swooped into a geranium bed and haled forth a half-inch of leggy insect. Joe felt a wave of intense delight sweep over him. Here at last, at last, a girl who didn't screech at sight of a bug! She dropped the sprawly thing into Joe's huge palm.

"Great Scott!" Joe gasped. "It's a — No, 'tisn't. It's a—a—" He gaped at it.

"The little beast!" cried Theresa. "He bit me!" She showed a white welt on her finger, and as she pointed, two other welts appeared. "It's poisonous," she decided. "Ugh! Nasty! And there are thousands of 'em. Oh, well, another trouble more or less—"

In spite of her gay courage, she sighed. Joe shut the struggling insect into a box, put Lucien on his shoulder, and turned to go.

"How about training vines on those fences?" he inquired. "I'll go dig some out on the moors, some kinds I know that'll grow quick. We can cover the fences all over. Pretty, huh? And with a row of tall hollyhocks and maybe cosmos—why, the old house will be a perfect peach of a place in a triangle of greenery and flowers. I'll go dig 'em right away. I know some stuff that'll make 'em grow like greased lightning."

He shoved the water glass into her hands and lumbered off, with the grace, the speed, and the good intent of a baby tank. Not till he got out on the moors, with Lucien frisking about his feet, did he see what he had done. He paled a trifle. Sadwether, senior, had never lost a fight yet. And—Joe had linked hands with the enemy.

Life is made up largely of little things. Calamities come and go, and by reason of their very size leave less of a gash than what Mrs. Smith whispered about you to Mrs. Jones. A bludgeon deadens by sheer weight; it's the pinpricks that hurt. Theresa confessed one day to Joe that the spite fence and the dearth of boarders wounded her less than something else. In imitation of the country club at Harbin City, the development corporation had built a stone-and-cement monstrosity which they called the Strandmere Club. Partly because all the new summer colony belonged to it, but chiefly because she herself had not been asked to join, Theresa's dearest ambition twined round that stiff-necked and corporation-ridden organization. She wanted to dash about the club tennis courts. She wanted to loll on the wide porch and gossip about any one not present. She wanted to sip weak tea at a strong price in its Gothic and gosh-awful dining room.

"Why, I used to play pirates' cave on that very spot," she declared to Joe one afternoon, while he pottered among the vines. "I had a hopscotch lined out there before tennis was thought of in these parts. We owned the hillock for—oh, years. Seems mean—doesn't it?—that the last of the Cromptons can't go into that clubhouse, no more than if I had the plague. And I could've been elected a member all right if it hadn't been for that Sadwether crook."

Always Joe started at sound of his name. He wore a pseudonym awkwardly, but Theresa had no suspicions.

"His wife could've got me in," she went on, "when they organized this spring. But she don't like me, I hear"—this with a wicked smile—"because some one told her one or two remarks I made about the corporation. The skinny old cat! I'd die happy if I could just get to be a member. Honest, I'd rather get into that club than lick Old Man Sadwether on this proposition!"

She waved at the fences, no longer prison walls, but beautiful, green back-grounds for the comfortable old house.

"You've done wonders. But I'm about at the end of my rope. Here it is summer, the hotel and cottages are crammed, and I haven't got one boarder."

"They'll come," said Joe.

They came. From the hotel they came in a body next day. Within a week both hotel and cottage village were empty, and the clubhouse might have been a pesthouse for all the popularity it enjoyed. Theresa filled her rooms to overflowing. She put up cots on the side porch. She sent to town for tents and made her triangle of land, inside its vine-clad fences, a camping ground. Those whom she had to turn away for lack of space went with lamentation, for the fame of her cookery was abroad in the land. Theresa grew a bit thin and harried looking, but, ah, how corpulent and smug grew her bank account!

Little things had worked the change. Not the vines nor the cookery, though these constituted no drawback. Bugs had wrought the miracle. Like a bolt from the blue, Strandmere had found itself smitten by a brand-new pest. The leggy insect which had nipped Theresa so viciously descended from somewhere upon the community and ravaged it like one of the plagues of Egypt. Vegetables, fruit trees, foliage, all were listed on the new bug's diet. In intervals between stripping the moors of flowers and leaves, it occupied itself with

human beings, whom it considered edible. Gypsy moth, army worm, seventeen-year locust, browntail moth, blight, and rash—these dwindled to zero compared with the latest affliction. A caterpillar with a mosquito sting, or a mosquito with a caterpillar appetite, the sprawly bug went through the moors like fire through wheat. And then proceeded to do likewise to the prospects of the Strandmere Development Corporation.

Only one spot on the shore escaped. It was the triangle of land owned by Theresa Crompton, cut off from the plague-infested region by the tall bulwark of fence. Only within that cool triangle, opening toward the turquoise summer sea, could the holiday maker live without scratching. A magic circle appeared to have been drawn around the place. The bug that hurdled other people's fences left the spite rampart unclimbed.

Tormented by the foggy and thick-witted reports from his son, aghast at the impending bankruptcy of his developments, but unwilling to show himself at the Crompton home, Sadwether dispatched Julius the Spy to investigate both Joe and the Crompton immunity from bugs. The corporation tract had been a deserted village for a week when Julius the Spy clamored for admittance to the triangle christened by a grateful summer-boarder crowd "Neverscratch-by-the-Sea." A slim young fellow with long, shrewd eyes and a habit of glancing sidewise, Julius had the tenacity of purpose that an investigator ought to possess. He simply would not be turned away. Felt a bit run down—one lung maybe touched—doctor ordered sea air—Theresa really had not the heart to resist such a confidential smile and such a fastidious taste in clothes. She made two tents grow where but one grew before, and wedged Julius into a corner between the hollyhocks and the peas.

About the time Julius arrived, Joe sauntered into his tumbledown shack to find T. Farnsworth Murray waiting.

"Just dropped round to look at Cooteyville-on-the-Blink," Murray confessed languidly. "The development seems to run to cootages, not cottages. My word, how the little devils do bite! How d'you stand it?"

"Oh, they don't bother me," replied Joe.

Murray favored him with a long, thoughtful glance, while Joe coaxed Lucien from pocket to knee and sat stroking his glossy fur.

"They don't bother Miss Crompton, either," observed Murray at length.

Joe gave a sheepish grin. He patted Lucien for a moment and then launched into an oration most prolix and involved and enthusiastic for one of his native reticence.

Murray listened with interest. A few minutes later, the two rose—Joe baggy and unkempt as ever, Murray as ever spruce and neatly tailored—and shook hands solemnly like men who conclude a pact. Murray was whistling merrily when he climbed into his navy-blue car and threw in the clutch.

That same evening an odd adventure befell Joe. He had been fussing round among the vines after sundown, in accordance with his duties as self-appointed gardener. A contented hum of conversation rose on all sides, as well-fed and non-itching boarders discussed the thousand nothings appropriate to the occasion. Joe pondered a remark tossed at him by Theresa not long before. Some one had mentioned a big burglary in the city, and Julius the Spy had adroitly hinted at what he might have done under similar circumstances. Needless to say, what Julius the Spy admitted he might have done would have proved the utter undoing of the thieves. Julius was an unafraid lad. If you didn't believe it, you could ask him.

"B-but," Joe had ventured, "what if their guns really were loaded?"

Then Theresa thrust in a word. She looked radiant in a busy sort of way as she halted near the kitchen steps with a basketful of crisp lettuce that somehow brought out the tan lines of her frock and the frank red glint of her hair. Theresa possessed a conscience, even if she was getting prosperous; in spite of hired girls, she superintended the meals, and thereby won golden opinions from her guests.

"Any man would have put up a fight," Theresa said, a cold emphasis on "man" and a little spark in her sapphire eyes. "Caution is all right in its place, but I like 'em with a dash of backbone, myself."

Now, Joe knew he wouldn't have put up a fight. He had never put up a fight in his life. He hated fights. He was scared of a loaded gun, plain scared. And here came this Theresa woman talking about hero stuff! She seemed rather to fancy the cocky and well-dressed Julius, too. As for Joe, of course she thought him just a funny kind of tramp, and he couldn't even make a hit with her by reporting the fact that Julius happened to be a paid servant of the corporation. Not a surplus of chivalry kept Joe from telling this, but a deficit of knowledge. He had no idea that Julius was employed by dad; the thought would have turned him to jelly. Ignorant, then, as to how black his troubles really were, but conscious that they multiplied, Joe sighed and put his hand in a pocket to rub Lucien's head, as he often did when bothered about something. Lucien gave a sleepy chirr-rr. But Joe sighed again. He would so like to make a hit with that red-haired girl.

Fate, which often pays not the least attention to a man's needs, directed Joe at that moment toward the Crompton back parlor. Lucien loved hazel nuts, and Joe recalled that Theresa had

stored some behind the piano for the squirrel's special delectation. The tiny back parlor was the one room Theresa reserved for herself, and at this hour no one should have been in there. Yet, as Joe stepped across the threshold into the glimmering dark, he felt that he was not alone. The drone of conversation from the boarders came but faintly into the room. It died out altogether when something, perhaps a draft, swung the door gently shut. Speculation about burglars and loaded guns hadn't heightened Joe's courage. The hair prickled along the back of his neck. He paused, irresolute.

Out of the gloom a voice spoke in hard, cold tones, while an object even harder and colder suddenly pressed against Joe's ear.

"Hand over what's in your pocket," said the voice.

As in a flash, Joe saw himself overpower this invisible burglar and prove a hero for Theresa and all the world to wonder at. But as in another flash, he saw himself fail in the gallant attempt, and a sound as of sad, sweet funeral marches filled the air. So quick is thought that, though both pictures leaped across his brain, Joe barely hesitated in choosing the better part of valor. Instinctively his hand went to the pocket where Lucien lay warmly snuggled.

"Not that pocket," directed the glacial voice. "Don't try to kid me. I'm after the real goods. Hand it over and don't go to sleep on your feet."

Dazed, Joe put his hand into the other pocket and withdrew what he felt to be the only thing of value in his possession at the moment. As he proffered the papery bundle, the other man snatched it so eagerly that his fingers were heard to break through its outer covering. Instantly a thin buzzing rose. Almost at once came a muffled outcry from the burglar, and then in the darkness an appalling succession of noises,

as if a man darted hither and yon, slammed into furniture, brought up soundly against the wall, and blindly flung himself in zigzags to escape a relentless antagonist.

Petrified, Joe stood like a statue while a picture went off its hook with a sidewise rasp and a climax of shattered glass. From the jar of the fall, he judged it to be the crayon portrait of Theresa's auntie, a gigantic thing in a frame only less horrible than itself. He quivered when the maddened unseen, with a swoop of an arm that sounded like the swish of a flail, hit the fragile carved cabinet in one corner and started a crashing, endless avalanche of curios that smashed and clashed and clanked and thudded. He jumped when, in a frenzy, the fellow came down across the piano keys with a tremendous yowling of the rumbly ones at the foot of the scale and a loud soprano squall from the others.

Like an obbligato to this lunatic symphony the thin buzzing continued, cut by staccato cries from the intruder. A gleam of light unexpectedly indicated the open window. Joe, still as a stone, dimly saw the fellow clutch at the papery bundle where it had fallen, hurl it through the window, and then gropingly, but at terrific speed, charge in the general direction of the door. He collided with Joe, whom he violently kicked in passing, and then trod upon. He ran quite by chance, as it appeared, against the door handle, tore open the door, and fled. In his haste he dropped the revolver, which went off with a tremendous report.

The shock brought Joe to his feet with a nervous squawk. The room fell silent save for an occasional trickle of belated curios still sliding from the shattered cabinet. That thin buzzing had died.

"Well, he asked for it, didn't he?" Joe demanded resentfully of the dark.

For the only thing in his possession

which Joe had considered of value when the burglar had accosted him had been a small, but somewhat unusual, hornets' nest. Apparently, however, this had not been what the intruder had sought.

Abashed at the uproar, bathed in the perspiration of alarm, Joe sought the door, got confused, couldn't find it, found it, stumbled from the room, and came face to face with the babbling guests. And with Theresa. The girl did not babble. She held a lamp high above her head and gazed mutely. Chaos. A revolver on the floor. Joe pale, but holding his ground. The circumstantial evidence shrieked for interpretation, and in a tumult of excited chatter, the guests convicted Joe of valor in the first degree.

"Shucks!" He fondled the terrified Lucien, who scrambled to a shoulder and sat there in a shiver. "I wasn't—I didn't——"

Something stronger than mere conscience overcame his impulse to tell the truth. For the lamp began to tremble in Theresa's hand, a gleam of tears to shine in her frightened eyes. One of the boarders considerably took charge of the lamp, so that Theresa could clutch Joe's moist palm in both of hers.

"I knew you'd do it," she choked.

That night, when Joe slouched down the beach to his shack, the waves were thundering an anthem of joy, the stars were swinging great golden lamps of celebration, and all was so right with the world—so right, so right!—that Joe startled Lucien by chanting in shrill, defiant tones the only melody he knew. It was that plaintive little ballad which begins: "Hooray; Hooray! Father's going to be hung!" Joe chanted it right through:

"Hooray! Hooray! The darned old son-of-a-gun!

For he was mighty mean to me when I was mighty young.

But now I'll get even with fa-a-a-ather!"

The noose seemed to tighten round father's throat next day. Theresa melted toward Joe in a manner to drive Julius the Spy well-nigh insane. With deep interest, Joe noted that Julius bore on chin and forehead some lumps such as hornet stings develop into. Darkness last night had shrouded his assailant's identity, and in the absence of definite proof, the hero of the occasion refrained from accusations. Impractical chaser of butterflies, he fancied the attack to have been inspired by jealousy. You and I know it to have been inspired by the most wonderful thing in the world—business enterprise. Julius merely desired to give to mankind, duly patented in his own name and sold for a trifling sum per bottle, the cootie cure upon which the bugologist had stumbled.

Not by accident did the strange new bug omit Theresa's homestead in the course of its devastations. Surely you couldn't have thought that? The strange bug felt no consideration for Theresa, but it felt a decided aversion to the odorless, colorless, deadly fluid with which Joe daily sprinkled the spite fence, the flowers, and the vines. At first Joe kept his remedy secret because it was only an experiment; then because it helped Theresa toward prosperity; and finally because he dared not tell his father that he had not only helped Theresa, but had failed to extend the same help to the corporation.

Furtively, therefore—hiding it even from the finest pair of sea-blue eyes in the world—Joe performed mysterious rites at sundown with the bottle of colorless fluid. Furtively Julius the Spy watched him. No idea of calling the attention of Sadwether, senior, his employer, to the remarkable remedy occurred to Julius. He was an investigator, not a philanthropist. Very well he knew that Joe didn't appreciate the market value of the recipe; he knew very well that if Joe did appreciate it,

he wouldn't share the secret and the profit with an acknowledged rival; and he feared to try wheedling the recipe out of Joe lest he thereby betray the invention's value. Altogether it was a situation that would have taxed the brain of any youth who happened to be both in debt and in love. Julius, like the snappy young man he was, had tried to take the shortest cut.

Unaware of all this, but conscious that by great good luck he was become a hero, Joe reveled in the unaccustomed laudation which floated round him like a heady incense. He caught Theresa's glance more than once, kind and thoughtful and appraising. It made Julius the Spy frown blackly. Julius felt that though the businesslike Theresa might be just the wife for gentle, dilly-dally Joe, yet Joe was not the husband for her. There may have been something in this view of the situation. Within his own mind Julius called them the "Live Wire" and the "Dope."

But a Live Wire may give off such sparks as will sting even a Dope into action. Theresa began to train Joe, to drop hints about clothes brushes and shoe shines and hair cuts and finger nails. The portent filled Joe with horrified delight. He felt it the beginning of the end. And—the question troubled him vastly—was Theresa the kind of woman who'd permit a man to keep some clever little snakes or maybe a porcupine in the cellar? Or was she the kind who'd howl if a man tracked mud across the floor? Those red-haired girls, weren't they sort of—of—"

Love is love, however, and Joe proceeded to make of himself a human sacrifice for his goddess. Stealthily he sent to town for decent clothes and a new pair of shoes and a lot of high collars such as Julius the Spy affected. No goddess of ancient Assyria got more torture to the square inch from

her victims than Joe suffered during his term of probation. The collar scraped his brown neck raw. The clothes made him feel stiff and stodgy as he never felt in khaki trousers and a torn shirt. Lucien wriggled uncomfortably in a slash of pocket not half big enough. And the shoes—ye shades of the Inquisition!—those new and brilliant and murderously well-fitting shoes!

The approval in Theresa's smile as he hove into view almost repaid him for the mental and physical anguish. For her smile vanished swiftly. One of the kitchen girls had yielded to a fit of temperament and departed in a fine frenzy.

"How nice you look!" Theresa complimented, added in the same breath, "Heavens! The soup!" and fled round the yard to the kitchen door.

Joe followed in the direction of heavens, the soup, mildly anxious to learn the significance of the cryptic remark. Any woman would have known that Theresa meant that dinner time had come and the soup ought to be in process of getting served. Already the guests were gone from the front porch, leaving it to that strange emptiness of a summer-boarder place at the meal hour. Julius the Spy, belated a trifle, hastened up the path with his customary alert gait. He smiled rather nastily at Joe's new suit. Nor did the high collar and inquisitorial shoes escape his sidelong glance.

"You and me might as well understand each other," he suggested.

"Yeah?" said Joe, shifting to the other foot.

"Nifty rags won't help you any," Julius went on. "She wants a swell dresser that knows how to wear his clothes. She wants a fellow with pep. This heroic stuff might be all o. k. for a while, but, believe me, the little lady ain't any fool. When it comes to seeing the same map across the

breakfast table every morning for the rest of her life, I guess she'd rather see one that got a shave and a hair cut now and then instead of something that looks like an election bet."

"Yeah?" said Joe.

"I'm telling you for your own good—lay off. That's all. Lay off. I ain't a fellow to be fooled with."

"Yeah?" said Joe. "How'd you get that funny bump on your chin?"

"Nor I won't waste conversation on you, neither," Julius retorted with dignity. "You're playing this hero stuff for all it's worth, but you simply ain't got the cards."

"Yeah?" said Joe.

"Yeah," said Julius. "You better drop out of the game right now."

"Well," Joe drawled, "I d'know. I got a cute little trump card up my sleeve."

Julius gave a scornful snigger.

"If you mean that bug juice—"

Faint surprise crossed Joe's face.

"Oh, no—something better than that."

"I don't believe you," remarked Julius uneasily.

"And besides," Joe pursued, "a girl don't choose a fellow for his looks. Nor for his clothes. It's his nature she picks him for. 'Kind hearts are more than coronets.'"

Julius laughed derisively.

"Yes, they are!" he jeered and swung along toward the dining room.

As Joe hobbled round to the kitchen door through which Theresa had disappeared, he smiled at the words of Julius. Joe had a gift for Theresa beside which an earl's coronet was a mere bauble of tin. In good time this gift should be flashed before her delighted vision. Perhaps this very day.

He found Theresa elbow-deep in soup. An unexpected visitation in the form of two wandering motorists had dropped in to disarrange the schedule further. Daintily flushed, desperately

driven, but cool-headed, Theresa flew about the kitchen; gave rapid commands, directed the cook-stove orgies. Lost in admiration of her poise in emergencies, Joe blundered across everybody's path a dozen times till, with an impatient laugh, Theresa pushed him into a corner and darted out to the vegetable garden for fresh parsley.

Determined to help, the young man picked up a tray of soup plates and went through the swinging doors into the dining room. What was that remark about kind hearts and coronets? Joe's kindness of heart gained a reprisal instead of a reward. As he set the last plate of soup carefully down before a guest, he glanced at the diner for approval. Astonishment paralyzed him. The guest was T. Farnsworth Murray, and at his side glared the other unexpected motorist—dad himself.

Dad had come to spy out the land on his own account, and was having more of a success than he anticipated. The look that he bent upon his son was one to send a chill down that young gentleman's spine.

"So!" ejaculated dad, and you know how dreadful that one syllable can sound. In this case it embodied every sentiment known to the human heart except those of admiration and sympathy. With a single word it summed up the cataclysm of emotion which a socially ambitious man feels upon beholding his son acting in public as waitress for a red-haired enemy girl.

Nor did T. Farnsworth Murray's presence relieve the situation.

"Not that I wish to be critical," said Murray as Joe still clung to the plate and gaped, "but if you will kindly remove your forefinger from the mulligatawny——"

The elder Sadwether shoved back his chair, stumbled to his feet, tried thickly to speak, and made a savage gesture for Joe to follow him. Joe took his forefinger from the soup, dried his hand

absently on the front of his new coat, and with a white face obeyed the summons. Murray followed also, and put a not unfriendly hand on the culprit's elbow.

"I fixed it," Murray muttered. "You know. It's o. k."

Joe smiled wanly. And then, the empty porch having been attained, the typhoon burst.

"I'm sorry, sir," Joe said at intervals. And once: "Well, I can't help it if I'm not smart." And again: "It's not red, really; it's more auburn."

He might as well have tried to talk down a hurricane. The senior Sadwether outdid himself. Suddenly he noted that Joe didn't appear to listen. The young man's gaze concentrated on the parental sleeve. Mechanically he fumbled in a pocket, drew out a little vial of colorless liquid, and flipped a few drops at his father's shoulder. Sadwether, senior, looked down in time to see one of the strange new bugs curl up and die.

"Must've brought it in with you," Joe explained. "We haven't any on the grounds."

For the first time in his life, Sadwether began to stammer.

"You mean—it's you that invented—— Oh, my son! My boy!"

Joe blinked.

"And you used it to help that red-headed hussy instead of your own father!" cried Sadwether in reproach. "How could you, Joe? With the Strandmere proposition all shut to thunder, when a few drops of this stuff——"

"Auburn more than red," Joe insisted.

Sadwether waved a generous hand.

"Never mind, son. Just proves what I've always said. You're a genius, but you lack business sense. I'll develop this thing properly, my boy. Why, there's millions in it! Let's see that bottle."

Joe unexpectedly thrust the vial back into his pocket.

"Dad," he said stubbornly, "do something for me first. Pay Theresa—pay Miss Crompton her own price for the homestead."

Sadwether's eyes flashed. But, after all, one must humor a genius. And he had come prepared to bribe the girl into revealing the secret of her immunity from the bug pest. He pulled out a roll of bills so big that Theresa's eyes popped when—obeying an imperious summons—she came, gasped, and took the money into her capable hands.

"Covered with gold pieces now," Joe reminded her, blushing, and waved toward the fences. "I—I hope that makes us square."

"Us?" said Theresa, mystified.

Half choked in the effort to swallow his pride, Sadwether looked at the girl.

"Joe is so good-natured," he commented bitingly, "that it's easy for unscrupulous persons to take advantage of him. Naturally, since it's the first job he ever got, he won't feel like resigning. Still, if you think you can get another waitress in my son's place—"

Theresa took two steps backward.

"Your son!"

"Please—dear—" Joe began.

The scarlet mounted in her cheeks.

"Then you lied about clam digging!" she managed to say. "Oh, don't begin to tell me what you've done and how you've helped! I guess I had it coming to me, from your father's son!"

Joe's plump face fell.

"But there's something else," he pleaded. "You're a member of the Strandmere Club now, Theresa. One of the directors. Honest."

Murray nodded confirmation.

"Oh!" cried Theresa. "Oh, Joe!" Rapture replaced the bitter droop of her mouth. Life is made up of little things, you remember. And, after all, Joe, though not a clam digger, was the son of a millionaire.

The elder Sadwether, however, had lived too long to believe in altruism.

"Who got her in?" he demanded.

"Murray fixed it for me," Joe grinned.

A terrible premonition gloomed in Sadwether's tones.

"And how did you fix Murray?"

"Huh?" said Joe. "Oh, I gave him the patent for my cootie cure."

The elder Sadwether was quick at figures, but if anything Theresa was quicker.

"What?" she shrieked, living magnificently up to her red hair. "You gave away millions—millions?" And can you blame her much?

"But—but," faltered Joe, "I got you into the Strandmere Club—"

Father turned a rich purple.

"This is ab-so-lute-ly the end!" he remarked with the calm of utter fury, "I'm through with you! Get me? I'm through!"

He stamped down the path toward his waiting machine. Murray, with a quizzical lift of the brow, went back to his dinner. Theresa, sensible girl, turned away—and found Julius at her elbow. And she took his arm and looked up at him in a manner which made you certain she would howl if a man tracked mud across the floor. Those red-haired girls after all, are sort of—sort of—

Groggily Joe stared out across the sands. In a simple, kindly effort to make the world a pleasanter place for every one, he had lost his job, his paternal home, his patent, and his girl.

"Well, Lucien," he murmured with a bleak smile, "I still have you."

Whereupon he put his hand in his pocket, and Lucien bit the end of his finger off.

The poison ivy had again run true to form.

Down the path to the beach Joe stumbled and went blunderingly

through the sand till he reached a friendly dune. Here he dropped, staring blindly at a tuft of bayberry till it blurred and went double, and he knew that tears were in his eyes. All for that girl! All for that cursed, heartless, auburn—no red, red, *red*-headed girl! His face went down on the stub of bayberry.

"Oh!" cried an anguished little voice, so anguished and so little and so near that at first Joe half believed it was his own. He sat up quickly, and Theresa plumped down on her knees at his side. "Oh!" she cried again, her

clear gaze misty and her hair standing out in ringlets on the stiff breeze. "That Julius person—he—he tried— And all at once I knew—"

Glorious incoherence! Glorious and indubitably auburn ringlets! Glorious, brave, but very humble glance!

"Dear—" Joe began.

With a tiny gulp, Theresa threw her arms about him, bayberry stub and all, and kissed him squarely on his sun-burned neck.

There are people, you know, who admire poison ivy—and can pick it without getting stung.



CARPE DIEM

I AM too sad with knowledge not to know

A dream is but a dream;

So many faces covered up with snow,

That had so brave a gleam,

Have gone with wind and stream.

They might not stay, for all their valiance;

Nor shall this face I hold,

(Praying to keep it mine 'gainst Time and Chance)

Flooding my heart with gold,

Escape, even it, the cold.

Even as this summer day so hot and sweet,

So deep in flowers and grass,

This marble that is you from head to feet,

Like some frail bloom shall pass,

Or shadow in a glass.

In vain with desperate eyes I drink your eyes,

In vain with desperate hands

Fold you and love you, and with desperate lies

Would cheat the running sands—

Alas! Love understands.

Yea, and Love understands a wiser thing

Even than Wisdom knows:

That Joy is Joy, albeit so swift of wing,

And, though so soon it goes,

The Rose—ah, 'tis the Rose.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



"Even He who cast seven devils out
Of Magdalene
Could hardly do as much, I doubt,
For you, Faustine!"

SHE was probably the very worst woman of her time. She was certainly the most bewitching. In Rome, in 140 A. D., morals were everywhere at a pretty low ebb, except among the Christians; but Faustina went to such lengths of debauchery that even the free-thinking, free-living Romans were horrified and spoke of her with bated breath. Men committed crimes without number for her sweet sake—threw away their immortal souls to gain a smile from her cruel, cupid's-bow mouth and blithely committed murder for her favor.

Her name stands through the ages as a synonym for all that is shameful, rotten, and corrupt. Yet, in spite of it, poets have ever sung of her and ever will, so long as they sing of love; even as the modern—like Swinburne—has felt the beckoning finger of her super-woman magic—witness the lines I have just quoted.

Like nine-tenths of our super-women, she was unfortunate in her choice of a mother. This mother, Faustina Galeria, was notoriously bad, and led her husband—the emperor, Antoninus Pius—a pretty dance. She was quite the most talked-of—or, rather,

More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Faustina:

The Siren Who Became a Goddess

whispered about—woman in Rome, until little Faustina, who was born in 125 A. D., began to grow up. She was her mother's more-than-willing pupil in every sort of vice, and soon the talented pupil far outran her teacher. People forgot all about her mother in watching the antics of the daughter.

She created wild havoc among the nobles of her father's court. Husbands deserted their wives, lovers their sweet-hearts, to fling themselves at her sandaled feet, swearing eternal devotion.

Presently her young cousin, her father's adopted son, Marcus Verus—afterward known as "Marcus Aurelius, Emperor of Rome"—came to court. For some reason, they had not met since they were children. Faustina remembered Marcus as a pretty, but prim boy, without much sense of humor. Marcus remembered the girl as long-legged, harum-scarum, naughty, and provoking. As he was already betrothed to a dainty patrician girl, with whom he was very much in love, he was only mildly interested in the prospect of meeting Faustina.

The stories he had heard of her rather shocked him, anyway—that is, before he met her. From the first moment that he gazed into her strange, fathomless eyes, he forgot all about the unpleasant stories. Worse than that, he forgot all about his fiancée. From that hour until the

day of his death, there was no woman in the world for Marcus but Faustina. As long as life lasted, he worshipped her as a divinity.

Faustina herself was rather taken with Marcus. From a pretty boy, he had grown to look like a young Greek hero. He was her opposite in temperament. She was notoriously bad; he was just as notoriously good. The situation interested her.

In less time than it takes to tell it, Marcus' poor little sweetheart was doomed. Under the spell of Faustina's enchantment, Marcus broke the engagement without a qualm—and broke the girl's heart with it. But the two lovers had scant time to think about that. There was a whirlwind engagement, then a gorgeous wedding.

Marcus was wildly happy. So was Faustina—but not because she was in love with her husband. She made little pretense of that, except as it was necessary to pull the wool over his eyes. She was in love with life, with youth, with beauty, with love—and her cup was full and running over with all four.

She made a perfect fool of Marcus, hardly troubling to cover up her intrigues, so sure was she of his trust in her.

In the year 161, Marcus became emperor and took the name of Aurelius in memory of his foster father.

As wife of the emperor, Faustina had a chance to shine even more brilliantly than before, as an example to the women of the court. She trailed Marcus' name in the mud, with shameful disregard of his high calling and moral standing.

The emperor's friends—those good friends who take holy delight in telling us unpleasant truths—were forever whispering to him about Faustina; and many others did not trouble to whisper—they spoke aloud.

To every word of scandal Marcus turned a deaf ear. Either he really

did not believe a word against her or else he loved her so deeply and unselfishly that he would not acknowledge to any living soul that she was capable of being untrue to him.

Some of his friends earnestly advised him to divorce her. He merely turned a deaf ear again, and changed the subject.

The Roman people murmured and railed against their emperor's wife. Marcus refused to notice their complainings.

And Faustina had every noble at her husband's court ready to die for her. Each sighing swain, for a brief time, believed himself her only love—to be rudely awakened from his dream by finding that he was but one of a crowd, a single bead in her necklace of conquests.

One thing must be said in Faustina's defense—though it in no wise excuses her atrocious actions. Marcus Aurelius was not easy to live with. No one as naturally blameless as he could be easy to live with. Of course we have all been brought up on his philosophy. Most of us have passed through the stage when we felt that we really could not live without the aid of Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations." But even his most faithful followers can not deny that at times he is smug—and a self-satisfied poseur. I know this is rank heresy, but I must say it. No clock can strike twelve all the time, and mixed in with his immortal sayings are, occasionally, idiotic sophistries more or less of this type:

"Black is not white. Such being the case, wherefore, my friends, must ye say white is black?"

If Marcus Aurelius had written that, he could have got away with it you may be sure!

To a flutter-budget personality like Faustina, platitudes for breakfast, platitudes for luncheon, and platitudes for dinner must have palled after a

while. Imagine the before-breakfast attitude of a man who would write:

"Remind yourself every morning that before night you will probably meet some thoroughly objectionable person!"

I must say, Cuthbert's philosophy, "O look on the bright side!" is safer.

Almost all the greatest men have feet of clay, when you come right down to it. Even Emerson, who solved the problem of living about as well as any one could, is rumored to have wept when, during an attack of indigestion, he was told that he could not have his usual piece of pie for breakfast. Genius must have its off hours—and Marcus Aurelius was no exception. Faustina had to live with him during those off hours.

There is another thing people are prone to forget—his persecution of the Christians. No emperor except Nero was so bitter against them, or treated them with such cruelty. When I think of that, I am glad that Faustina pestered him so persistently.

By the way, among Faustina's blind adorers, so runs the story, was a tall, beautiful young Christian lad—a Thracian. Marcus ordered him tortured. Faustina interceded for the boy, begging her husband to set him free. For once, Marcus was deaf even to Faustina. He decreed a bath for the young man—of boiling oil. This did not endear Marcus the more to Faustina. She cherished, thereafter, a virulent secret grudge against him and a feeling of leniency toward the Christians.

Years later, this leniency cropped out in her son, Commodus. It was the only good thing about Commodus. He was almost the worst emperor Rome ever had, dissolute, immoral, debauched in every way; but he did not persecute the Christians, as did his saintly father. And I like to think that Faustina was indirectly responsible for this one good trait in her son.

Marcus was obliged to leave Faustina

to go her own sweet way, much of the time, for he was not only a great emperor, but a great general as well. His reign was stormy and full of wars, and he lived in camp for months at a time. It was in camp, by the way, that he wrote a great part of his "Meditations."

Naturally the hours did not lie idle on Faustina's hands. She managed to entertain herself with Lucius Verus, a noble, whom Marcus trusted implicitly. Lucius proved himself quite unworthy, at least as far as Marcus' wife was concerned. He was not content with loving her. He was prepared to go to any length to secure her as his wife. But Faustina, as usual, was only playing with him. She dearly loved to bring a man to the point where death was preferable to living without her—and then leave him to get over it as best he might. Like the cruel little boys who pin flies to the wall, she adored watching her victims struggle.

About the time she turned away from the sight of Lucius' anguish, her bored eyes met those of Cassius, a nobleman of Cyrrhus—and rested there, to Cassius' undoing. For at last Faustina was truly in love. Cassius was in many ways a great man until he met Faustina. She was poison to any one.

The young noble had been a faithful adherent of the emperor, a loved and valued friend. He never set out to be a traitor. But Faustina grew to love him with all the intensity of her lurid, flaming nature. What she wanted, she must have. And above all things in the world, she wanted a clear and unencumbered title to Cassius.

She wanted more. Because she worshiped Cassius, she wanted to provide him with everything the world could yield. She wanted to get rid of Marcus, and to put Cassius on the throne.

Matters were brought to a head when Marcus Aurelius became ill in camp. Faustina, thinking that he might die and knowing her son, Commodus, to be

a weak, callow, unlikable youth, feared that in the event of Marcus' death the throne might be seized by some outsider, and she herself be forced to leave the court. So, instead of hurrying to nurse her husband, she began feverishly to plot against him.

Marcus had made Cassius viceroy of all Asia. Faustina now planned to make him Emperor of Rome.

Knowing Cassius' love for Marcus, she had to plant dynamite carefully. She sent a courier by stealth to Cassius, with word that the emperor was ill of a mortal disease, which must very shortly end in his death. No time must be lost. Even now Marcus might be dead, she lied. Cassius could have his beloved Faustina for wife, and the throne to boot, if he would but hurry to organize a rebellion. He must march on Rome before an opposing faction could grab the throne.

"Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!" was the burden of her message.

The bait was too much for Cassius. Marcus was as good as dead, he thought; therefore, the viceroy was not really acting the part of a traitor—and Faustina, his angelic Faustina, was waiting for him. Still, loyalty to Marcus made him hesitate. While he was shilly-shallying, a message—sent by Faustina—told him that Marcus was dead.

He lost no time in mustering a rebel army. It was the one terrible mistake of his life, but he was absolutely blinded by Faustina's dazzling light. He did not stop to verify the rumor of the emperor's death, but put his army on the move at once.

His first step was to lay claim to the empire, on the ground that it had been bestowed on him by the soldiers quartered in Pannonia.

Before long, he learned that Marcus Aurelius was not dead at all, but, having once proclaimed himself emperor, Cassius stuck to it. The temptation to

win Faustina was too great—he could not turn back. He was drawn on by her to shipwreck as surely as was any poor mariner by the Lorelei.

He won the district bounded by Taurus and prepared to hold it to the death.

Now came Lucius Verus' chance at revenge. Lucius was lover-before-last, you remember. He discovered the whole plot and went to the emperor with all its sordid and smudgy details.

Marcus received him in silence.

Of Faustina's part in the affair, Marcus kept silent as long as he lived. He proved himself therein a great man.

For a time, also, he would have nothing to say regarding Cassius. But before long his soldiers got wind of the conspiracy and were greatly disturbed. They began to gossip, and vowed vengeance on the plotters. Then he called them together and made a speech. It is such a wonderful speech—even through its "holier-than-thou" atmosphere—that I cannot resist giving it to you, in part.

"Fellow soldiers," began Marcus, "I have not come before you to express indignation, nor yet in a spirit of lamentation. Why rage against fate, that is all powerful? But perchance it is needful to bewail the lot of those who are undeservedly unfortunate, a lot which is now mine.

"Are not both these conditions surpassed in affliction and in absurdity by the proof before us that there is naught to be trusted among mankind, since I have been plotted against by my dearest friend and thrust into a conflict against my will, though I have committed no crime nor even error?

"What virtue, what friendship shall henceforth be secure, after this experience of mine?

"Has not faith, has not hope, perished?

"If the danger were mine alone, I should give the matter no heed. I was not born to be immortal." How he

hated himself! "But since there has been a public secession—or, rather, obsession—and war is fastening its clutches upon all of us alike, I should desire, were it possible, to invite Cassius here and argue the case with him in your presence, or in the presence of the Senate.

"And I would gladly, without a contest, withdraw from my office in his favor, if this seemed to be for the public advantage.

"For it is on behalf of the public that I continue to toil and undergo dangers and have spent so much time yonder, outside of Italy, during mature manhood, and now, in old age and weakness, though I cannot take food without pain"—I have often suspected, when reading his "Meditations," that he had indigestion—"nor get sleep free from anxiety.

"But since Cassius would never be willing to agree to this—for how could he trust me, after having shown himself so untrustworthy toward me?—you, at least, fellow soldiers, ought to be of good cheer.

"There is only one thing I fear, fellow soldiers—you shall be told the whole truth—and that is that he may either kill himself, because ashamed to come into our presence, *or some one else, upon learning that I shall come and am setting out, may do it.*" Please notice that last hypocritical bit. Great is the power of suggestion.

"Then should I be deprived of a great prize, both of war and victory, and of a magnitude such as no human being ever yet attained. What is this prize? Why, to forgive a man that has done you an injury, to remain a friend to one who has transgressed friendship, to continue faithful to one who has broken faith.

"Perhaps this seems strange to you, but you ought not to disbelieve it. For all goodness has not yet perished from among mankind, but there is still, in us, a remnant of virtue."

This, and much more, is what Marcus said to his soldiers and wrote to the Senate. Never once did he accuse Cassius, later, except to call him ungrateful.

Strange to say, very shortly after this speech, Cassius was set upon suddenly, while out walking, by a centurion named Antonius. He was stabbed in the neck, but the blow was stupid and did not kill him at once. Antonius tried to finish the job, but his horse plunged away with him, leaving the murder half done.

Cassius might have escaped, but a band of soldiers—who had also heard Marcus' speech—got him. Cutting off his head, they started back with it to meet the emperor.

Marcus was so overcome that he could not even look at the severed head—much to the murderer's naïve disappointment. He gave orders that it should be buried at once.

Thus, after a brief dream of sovereignty, which lasted but a little over three months, Faustina's latest victim was laid to rest. To prevent future uprisings, his little son was murdered a few days later.

Marcus refused to prosecute any one concerned in the rebellion. As a contemporary chronicler very quaintly puts it:

"Marcus, upon reaching the provinces that had joined in Cassius' uprising, treated them all very kindly and put no one, either obscure or prominent, to death."

That disposes of every one but the archconspirator in the plot—Faustina.

One of her greatest success secrets was in knowing when the game was up. It was up now. She had played her best cards for Cassius and lost him. How much Marcus believed against her, she could not be sure. How and when the blow might fall, she did not know. She could not stand the uncertainty, and she decided not to wait to find out.

Proud to the end, she would let no one know her real fears. She caused word to be spread abroad that she was suffering from gout.

She decided to accompany Marcus "for her health," on an expedition to the East. Perhaps she wanted to take a last look at the homeland of her beloved Cassius. At any rate, she went. Near the foot of Mt. Taurus she was taken ill—and died with startling suddenness. So well had she done it that no one was able to tell just how.

Her death nearly killed Marcus. In spite of her perfidy, in spite of everything, he worshiped her memory. After her loss, one of his first acts—and one of his finest—was to cause all the incriminating papers regarding her part in the plot to be burned. They had been found among Cassius' effects. Marcus did not even read them before burning them. Poor man, he did not wish to see documentary evidence of his wife's guilt; he preferred to deceive himself about her, even though the protection to his broken heart were no thicker than a gossamer veil.

In another pathetic attempt to whitewash Faustina's memory, he wrote to the Senate, saying:

"No one of those who coöperated with Cassius is dead."

As if, so, he could find some consolation for Faustina's loss!

The Senate did its duty by voting that silver images of Faustina and Marcus should be set up in the temples, and that an altar should be erected whereon all the maidens married in the city, and their bridegrooms, should sacrifice.

Marcus ordered a large golden image of Faustina to be carried in a chair to the theater whenever he should be a spectator there, and that the image should be placed in the seat, well forward, where she herself had been wont to take her place when alive, and that the wives of the court nobles should sit at a respectful distance behind it.

Not satisfied with this tribute to her memory, Marcus caused her to be ranked among the titular goddesses of Rome, and so made immortal. In addition, he caused medals to be struck in her honor, bearing the inscription: "Modesty," and exalted the place where she died into a city, which he called *Faustinopolis*. He ordered charity schools for orphan girls to be built in her honor, and spent the short time he outlived her in devising ways to insure her immortality.

It is safe to say that he grieved himself to death, though his doctors, who sought to favor Marcus' worthless son, Commodus, were thought to have had a hand in it. As he was dying, his devoted soldiers asked advice and help.

His reply was characteristic. Commending Commodus to their protection, he whispered feebly:

"Go to the rising sun. I am already setting!"

Is it not passing strange that Faustina—utterly wicked as we know her to have been—should yet have walked through life mowing down hearts as harvesters mow grain, and, as a climax to her mottled career, have carried a devotion like that of Marcus Aurelius' beyond the grave?



THE SEA TO-DAY

AS gray as age the sea to-day, and mild,
Save where the sunlight tips a wavelet's crest
With gold—as if some little loving child.
Had flashed her curls across an old man's breast.

ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON.



“Ladywoman”

By Sarah Glover Curtis

Author of “The Trouble Woman,”
“Coming All the Way,” etc.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man.

PRISCILLA WORTH had always felt that her coming into the world had been a less than polite intrusion on her part. Her parents' breeding prohibited any such intimation issuing from them, but even as a small child, she had recognized their adequacy unto themselves. Providence, possibly through intimate knowledge of the pair with whom she was to be placed, had endowed her with a well-rounded personality and a temperamental aloofness, so that she did not care too greatly.

A long procession of governesses did their duty by her according to their various lights, but they all went down before the imperturbability of the black-browed youngster who viewed any sentimental surgings that flowed toward her almost as impertinences. She applied herself consistently to her studies, but her play time she considered her personal and private business. She never argued, never made any excuse for disobedience, and when she had once refused acquiescence, she was impervious to persuasion. A new governess, not appreciating that the child's refusal to go to a certain party was final, accepted for her. When the day came, the governess spent troubled hours in alternately searching for her and contemplating the filmy party frock outspread on the bed.

A little after six, a thin, leggy little

girl of twelve, bright brown hair tumbled about, riding breeches spattered with mud, made her appearance, tired and happy. To her governess' remonstrance, she only said:

“To-day was our wild-West show, you know.”

“But you could have had that any day—and Marjorie's party——”

“We had told people the show was to-day. One just doesn't change things like that. Do you suppose they'd change the day of the hunt if there was a party?”

“But the hunt is rather different from you children's wild-West show.”

“It isn't to us, Miss St. John.”

Her governess sighed.

“Whatever happened to your hair?”

“I had a fight,” adding serenely, above Miss St. John's horror, “with Billy Ware, because he called me ‘Prissy.’ I sat on him and banged his head on a stone until he promised to call me Pete like the rest. Everybody calls me that. Do you suppose you could manage it?”

But Miss St. John's distress was genuine; seeing which, Pete, as every one eventually did call her, begged a conciliatory bunch of violets from the gardener. When she presented the mass of purple fragrance, the touch of her well-cut lips was a mere concession to convention, and the older woman sighed her realization of failure.

There was only one person, in fact, who seemed to count vitally with the

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child, but on Laurence Treadwell, her mother's younger brother, she lavished the outpouring of all her heart. He was barely fifteen years her senior, and she had rendered him abject worship from her babyhood. He it was who had given her the alluring sobriquet of Pete, and he had a way of lifting her by the elbows and coaching her in the arts of chinning herself and skinning the cat and turning cartwheels which kept her raptly enslaved. She tagged at his heels like an adoring puppy, and he was well content to have it so. They seemed to take a wonderful amount of joy in each other's companionship, and the child knew much of the man's wide interests and, by hearsay at least, of his numerous friends. There was one man, John Cameron, who was especially close to Treadwell, and through the tales she heard, a glamour grew about him in the child's mind. According to Treadwell, he exemplified all that was fine and worthy of admiration, for in a shy, boy-man fashion, the young uncle tried to teach her the value of human gold.

When Pete was a little more than sixteen, Laurence Treadwell died, suddenly and shockingly. She mourned him with a terrible unrestraint. The god of love she had revered shyly through the beauty of the woods and sea was transformed into a god of careless unconcern, who permitted the strong and good to perish while insanity and crime lived on.

She refused to see any one. Even when they brought her word that John Cameron had come halfway across the continent to see her, she would not leave her room. Afterward she was sorry, but years were to pass before she heard his name again.

As soon as they could approach her, her parents told her that Treadwell had left her his millions and, what seemed vastly more important to her then, the great emerald he always wore. When they gave her the ring, her sobs broke

out wildly against the order of things which retains the inanimate within our touch while the immortal slips hopelessly away. She took the ring herself to a jeweler and waited while it was made to fit her slender finger. And when her parents saw the emerald blazing on her hand, they wisely held their peace concerning the propriety of her wearing it, knowing the futility of comment.

At boarding school, she was prominent rather than popular, and it was the same in the social world. She was invited everywhere—the Treadwell-Worth connection assured that—and people liked her immensely for what she had and moderately for what she was. Girls, in happiness or sorrow, never confided in her, but men liked to take her about. She showed to advantage, was witty, companionable, gave nothing and expected nothing. But they saw what she was far from suspecting—that she was quite unawakened and that the freedom of action and thought which she had claimed from childhood was gaining a thickening veneer of selfishness. She never put another individual before herself, but because she liked the warm sensation of giving freely of money and pleasure to those who needed, she suspected herself, in her inmost heart, of beautiful generosity. It can be said with little exaggeration, however, that since the death of Laurence Treadwell, she had not inconvenienced herself in any way for another person who breathed.

When the world conflict broke out, she wrote checks for the Allied War Relief with a generosity that thrilled the workers and called forth a perfunctory remonstrance from her father. She gave because she had always loathed the Germans, and because she had spent many happy months in England, and because Laurence Treadwell had always affirmed the Frenchmen's su-

periority to any other race. The war itself meant nothing to her as yet.

But with the sinking of the *Lusitania*, she developed a strange unrest which increased when some of the nicer men she knew came to tell her good-by. They couldn't stay out of it any longer, they said, and—be sure and write, you know. When quite the nicest of them all went, both her hands sought his and, looking down, he saw a moisture in her eyes.

"Why, Pete!" he exclaimed in surprise. Then he asked irrelevantly "Remember the day you banged my head on a stone because I called you Prissy?"

"Yes," she answered with a shaken laugh.

"Then I think you'd better kiss me good-by."

But she did not like it, as her face showed when he released her, and, with an amused laugh, he caught up his cap.

"Come back to us," she called after him. "Oh, be sure to come back to us, Billy Ware!"

He did not, however. The story of his death was not pretty, and when it came to her, she went slowly from the house and, getting into her car, drove for hours through the rain. But she saw only the sunshine of a pleasant field, and children urging fat ponies on with lusty yells, and a grinning youngster who taunted at her elbow.

II.

A newborn soul is as weakling a thing as a newborn body. Subject to hunger and belly pains, thirst and sickness and vain wailings from untoward dreams in the smaller hours of darkness, its possessor is as weary from recent travail and present worry as the young mother whose offspring sickens far from a wise physician.

With the intrepidity of a Spartan

woman, Pete Worth took up the care of the stranger that had come to vex her, taught it the paths it should follow, and when it cried out, lashed it grimly with whips of scorn. It was tiring work and slow, and her slender body became yet more slender, her rather plain, clever-looking face grew plainer, and lines etched themselves about her eyes that were the color of the violets she used to wear.

Months added other months unto themselves, and then one morning found her, uniformed, a silver identification bangle about her wrist, sitting beside her strapped baggage in a downtown hotel.

Confused at the crossroads where a hundred arms pointed the way to service, she had taken first one, then another, only to turn back to find the one that was right for her. Then had come months of training—training that meant accustoming herself to sharing one bath with four other girls; drilling, which made her feel silly at first; obeying orders of other women; standing up when certain men came into the room, which amused her vastly; all the little things that made up each day and every day and that individually and collectively tested her purpose. The studies she had enjoyed, but the crafts had been hard on her hands.

Some of the girls who were taking the course she had liked and some she had not, but she had been on moderately friendly terms with them all, with the exception of one instructress whose hazel eyes were at times as yellow as the gold she loved. Mrs. Carson had had an officious method of obtrusion all her own. She had lived in the same house with the girls and had taken an unwarranted interest in their comings and goings. A good many of them had spluttered about the nosey old cat, but she had wisely enough let Pete alone. She taught design and was very clever at it, but one day, during one of their

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many invasions of the Metropolitan Museum, she had branched off into a dissertation on ceramics. She was confusing bucherro and Canopic vases with elaborate detail when she had caught Pete's involuntary grin of amusement. Conscious of a weakness in her subject, she had flushed angrily and, leaving a sentence incomplete, had led the way into another gallery.

The next day she had waylaid Pete on the stairs and, with specious friendliness, had argued the propriety of the girl's wearing such a conspicuous jewel as the emerald ring in such work as she was to be engaged in.

"Inevitably the question that arises in every mind," she had finished grandly, "is how a girl in your station can possibly afford such a ring. And the inference is—ah—unpleasant."

"Really?" Pete had said and had clattered down the stairs.

She had been amused, and pleased that they did not know who she was.

Other incidents had followed, indicative of Mrs. Carson's distaste for Pete and her reverence for class and caste distinctions, even those that separated her from the higher beings she craved to know. But no one at the school had suspected that the quiet, rather offish Miss Worth was in any way connected with Pete Worth, sportswoman, millionairess, and social light.

Sitting in her new uniform of an aid in occupational therapy, Pete wondered by what ill favor of fate Mrs. Carson had been detailed to the same hospital where she, Pete, was to be stationed.

She rose and surveyed herself in the long mirror. The plain Oxford-mixture suit had been refitted by her own tailor. She had tampered with Uncle Sam's regulations to the extent of creasing the crown of the black fedora, with its flat, dull-red rosette, until it actually fitted her head; every article of clothing was put on as only smart

women wear their clothes, and the bright brown hair waved close to her head without one straying and disfiguring lock.

She turned away in relief. She really did very well.

III.

"Ladywoman, hey!"

Pete raised one hand high above her head.

"Hey," she answered in grave salutation.

The early morning sunshine was streaming through the many windows of the long, bright ward. Twenty beds were ranged with military precision along either side. Some of them were occupied, but most of the soldiers were up and about for a part of each day at least. At one end a belated surgeon was finishing up his dressings, and in the sun parlor at the other end, a window-washing crew of convalescents were busy scrubbing and polishing. One of them was singing with much gusto and precision his greetings to a person called "Zip" while the others sang with him, but more slowly, which gave an oddly dolorous effect to an otherwise brisk song hit.

Pete grimaced.

"Oh, come on—all together!" she cried. And, standing tall and vivid in her blue indoor uniform with its white collar and elbow-deep white cuffs, she lifted up her sweet, rather husky voice and, beating emphatic time, brought them into unison. One of the men in bed added a high tenor, and soon all the ward rang with cheerful sound.

The surgeon turned in annoyance, but Pete, with a broad smile, was imitating a well-known conductor, and her smile was reflected on every boyish face.

"Good morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip, With your hair cut just as short as mine—" came the thunderous chorus, and the surgeon spoke wrathfully.

"Miss Worth!"

They sang on unheeding until a boy on crutches thumped his way up and, touching her arm, indicated the officer in the act of emitting another stenorian "Miss Worth!"

"Yes?" she called.

Deprived of their leader, the singers faltered, and the query came distinct and testy to her:

"Have you any idea how much noise you're making, Miss Worth?"

Her eyes were bright with amusement, but she inquired politely:

"Do we disturb you?"

"You do."

She turned to her chorus.

"Boys," she informed them gravely, "the concert is over."

With unimpaired good humor, she began setting out the work on which each man had been busied the previous day—the piece of basketry or stenciling or weaving, drawing boards, the jig saws and various equipment for toy making, wood carving, leather tooling. The surgeon, finished at last, stood watching her, impressed with her wasteless speed and the faultless memory that gave each man his own article. She had a comment for each bit of work, and the absorption on her face was reflected without exception in the eyes of the boys she served.

Her friends, those who had known cool, self-sufficient Pete Worth, would have marveled at this alert, vital girl who gave herself so freely to non-descript, crippled soldiers. The surgeon, who preferred as a general thing the evidence of his own eyes to reports submitted by subordinates, had decreed her, within six weeks of her arrival, the best aid of the whole outfit. With an ease that was almost uncanny, she was able to establish the right contact between herself and the boy who, classified according to his disability, craved human interest in his own particular problem, which he naturally felt to be

different from any other. Without obtruding herself, without the faintest suggestion that compliance with her advice would be a pleasing thing to herself, she was able to give every one who came under her care the life-giving realization that he counted, and that within him remained the potential power to carry on. Each man or boy was clearly individualized and, whether jokes or admonition, mockery or praise was the incentive he needed, that was he certain to get from "Ladywoman."

It was queer how they called her that, the surgeon mused. No one knew quite how it had started, but it clung and was somehow fitting.

One day he had overheard her argument with a nineteen-year-old boy who had lost his left arm and whose right arm was stiff from the extraction of bits of shrapnel. She had set up some raffia work for him, and when he had seen it, the boy had turned his face from her. There had been a complete silence, and then the girl had spoken with a break in her voice that must have brought a faint comfort to the boy's tortured heart.

"Jimmy," she had said, "Jimmy—if I thought that this old woman's work was all you could do, or all any of the rest of the boys could do—I'd—I'd blow up the hospital! But it's just to exercise your arm. Those bits of shrapnel weren't any too good for it, you know. And of course the sooner you start, the sooner you'll be discharged. And then after a vacation— Jimmy what did you do before you enlisted?"

"I was a toolmaker. I'd just finished my time," the muffled, bitter young voice had answered. "An' now—an' me married an'—"

"Are you married, Jimmy? Did you ever hear of the Treadwell Mills?"

"Sure."

"Well—I know some men there, and they've promised that any soldiers I

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send to them will get regular jobs—good ones, Jimmy. And your wife can—"

Before the surgeon had turned away, the boy had lifted his face to the eager planning of the girl who bent above him.

Unquestionably, she knew her job. Every man in the ward, but one, was working with energy and care on the petty tasks he knew led to real work in the real world. She kept them contented, happy, amused. What a lunk he had been to stop her "concert!"

"Miss Worth!" he called impulsively.

With professional docility, she came to him.

"Yes, Major Armstrong?"

"I—er—too bad I had to stop the song!"

"It didn't matter." Then, with an entire lack of impertinence, "We'll have another just as soon as you go," she assured him.

"Splendid," he said without a smile, "By the way, how are you coming with 8—290?"

"I'm not. He lies with his eyes closed, and when I talk to him, he says politely, 'Would you please not bother me?'"

"I know." Major Armstrong nodded. "He did that in ward four. I had him sent in here because I thought you might be able to break through his lethargy.

"Personally, I think he only needs a little time. Perhaps he has had some added trouble."

Major Armstrong scowled.

"The boy in the bed next his in ward four said he had had a letter from a girl, throwing him over. But he's older than the rest, and I'm afraid he's becoming hospitalized—which is—fatal. Well—I've asked Mrs. Carson to take a look in on him this morning."

Pete drew in her breath audibly.

"Beg pardon?"

"I did not speak, Major Armstrong."

"But—I thought you intended to!"

"Not at all."

"Very well. Good morning."

He turned stiffly away. Something was wrong between his favorite aid and her head. Mrs. Carson was forever registering petty complaints against Miss Worth, and evidently Miss Worth did not care for Mrs. Carson. Well, hang it, women were always hair pulling.

Pete walked down the ward to where 8—290 lay, his massive frame motionless under the covering. Rather battered was 8—290, a stubborn wound in his thigh, his right arm taken off at the shoulder, his left arm stiff from a fracture. His face wore the mark of the man who never asks quarter, and yet he seemed to have surrendered when men of lesser breed were riding superior to their mutilation. He was different from the other men in the ward, better educated, better mannered, finer, and he was the only one who had quit.

His head was moving restlessly on the pillow, and the girl stopped to get a glass of water before she approached him. When she offered it, he thanked her, drank greedily, and lay back with closed eyes. As she stood beside him, drawn by his helplessness and the rugged beauty of his dark face, struggling for the right key to open the way to him, she saw Mrs. Carson bearing down upon them, one of the many ubiquitous visitors in tow. With a curt nod, the head acknowledged her presence, continuing her voluble discourse upon the hospital and the merits of occupational therapy.

Pete sat down beside the boy next to 8—290. He, too, had lost his right arm, but was busy at work. By means of a small bed vise, he was engaged in metal work. Watching the men daily as she did, she could keep a mental record of their progress, and she glowed to the depths of her heart at the in-

creased dexterity of the big hand which last week had held a file as awkwardly as a novice. He was entirely engrossed in his work, and Pete turned to listen to Mrs. Carson, who was quoting learnedly:

"Progress through achievements constantly more difficult is the keynote of the war neuroses," she parroted. "The mechanism of recovery by occupational therapy is simple. It is the stimulus of an idea, the directing of that idea, so that doubt, fear, indecision, or indifference do not prevent its logical execution, and the development, through progressive steps, of orderly, industrious habits of thought with the accompanying initiative, application, and will power." A grave difficulty, she went on, coming to a complete pause by 8-290's bed, "is trying to make men such as this one realize the seriousness of their condition and improve their wonderful opportunities while they are here with us."

And then, to Pete's sick horror, Mrs. Carson began to lecture 8-290, who had unwisely opened his eyes upon her arrival. She expatiated upon the golden benefits his paternal government was showering upon him; she extolled the self-abnegation of the medical staff and the occupational staff; she moralized and sentimentalized and theorized while Pete gritted her teeth. She glanced at 8-290, and from his dark eyes there seemed to flash an S O S signal. Without explanation, she snatched the copper tray from the astonished boy beside her and approached Mrs. Carson.

"Excuse me," she interrupted suavely, "but here is a piece of metal work you might like to see. Mrs. Carson," she went on cordially to the visitor, "furnishes us with most of our designs. The men frequently originate things, but Mrs. Carson assists and advises so that their progress is wonderful. And 8-290"—he met the yel-

lowish eyes serenely—"is starting a bead watch fob. They're really good looking." She directed the visitor's attention to a knot of men working in the sun parlor. "Those men out there are making them. Don't you want to see them?"

"Why, yes," the visitor acquiesced. "If you could show me, Mrs. Carson?"

Eight-290 watched their departure. Then he turned to Pete.

"Why did you lie to her about the fob, Ladywoman?"

It pleased her vaguely that he should call her that, but she answered brusquely:

"I didn't want them to think you were a quitter."

He winced, and the girl's face paled as she waited.

After a moment he wetted his dry lips and flung his one arm across his eyes.

"You don't understand," he said.

She caught his big wrist in both her hands and drew his arm down.

"I know I don't," she said huskily. "Tell me what it is."

His eyes were closed and he answered as if tired:

"She—she broke the engagement."

"Who did? Why?"

"Elizabeth—because of—the arm, you know."

Such rage as she had never experienced filled her with a strange tumult. But when she spoke, her voice was steely calm.

"To hell with her!" were the words that issued from Priscilla Worth's patrician lips. "To hell with her!"

His eyes flew wide and a gleam appeared.

"Why, Ladywoman!" The gleam deepened to amusement. "Why, Ladywoman!"

A shadow fell upon them as Mrs. Carson reappeared, to glance sneeringly at the girl, whose long, slender fingers still gripped 8-290's big hand.

IV.

Eight—290 was improving. With the tenacity his big jaw promised, he had set about taming his wild left hand, as he called it. He talked, joked with his neighbors, and entered into the spirit of the ward now. He watched covertly the comings and goings of Ladywoman and sought every excuse to bring her to his side. She was unaware of it, and his eagerness for her attention made seconds of minutes, but it came to be that any unoccupied time in the ward was spent beside him. The boys observed it in loyally discreet silence. He was nothing but a buck private, for all that he was different and educated and all, and Ladywoman would sure get the bounce if she fell for him. He was a good guy, they said, all luck to him, but— They wished somebody would put Ladywoman wise to Mrs. Carson. She was always snooping about, watching.

It was a gala day when 8—290 made his initial trip into the sun parlor, which was the ward workshop. He was very lame on his bad leg, and the boys jeered at him and made him welcome. Pete, with small crimson disks high on her cheeks, went about her gracious work absorbed as ever, but not infrequent glances sought the big figure in the corner.

That day he told her about "Elizabeth." Pete gathered that she was beautiful, talented, and possessed of that intangible, quick-silver quality called charm, and that the man's love for her had been a high, consuming flame, which had burned itself away. No woman had ever made a definite enough impression on Pete to arouse her animosity. Mrs. Carson was a mere buzzing fly, beating her head against the window of the girl's poise. But as she sat listening to the low voice that seemed to have established a contact with her heartbeats, she became

conscious that the palms of her hands were moist and that a blur, which was not anger, but resembled it, was coming over her mind.

She lost a part of the narrative, but it seemed that the man's first doubt had arisen when Elizabeth had refused to marry him before he sailed. Unbidden, the thought had come to him that her reason had its foundation in the fear that he might return disfigured or disabled. His funk at the hospital had not been because she had thrown him over, or because he feared to face life with one arm, but from the sick conviction that women and children would forever shrink from him—a nightmare from which she had freed him.

Pete asked only one question:

"Why did you go as a private?"

He shrugged his big shoulders.

"What was good enough for my boys was good enough for me."

"Your boys?"

"The boys in my shop. I'm a manufacturer, you know."

"Really?" she said absently, for her mind was already busy.

Here was the man to help her carry on her work of finding jobs for the boys. Even now the boys in the ward were coming to him for advice and suggestions, and he was meeting them more than halfway. Because of his own disability, he would know better than any one else how to employ crippled men without pauperizing them. He was a manufacturer and would know how to develop special machinery for their use. Already she visioned him as head of the Treadwell Mills.

"Ladywoman, come back."

She laughed.

"I was years ahead. Do you want something?"

"Yes." For a moment she had the thought that his words were to be momentous. But he only said, "Saturday I have leave. Will you go for a ride with me?"

The reconstruction aids, as well as the nurses, were forbidden social intercourse with privates and non-coms. Pete, on whom rules made very slight impressions, forgot the restriction entirely and agreed.

"Why, yes," she said. "I'd love to."

V.

The little inn at which the aids were quartered was four miles from the hospital, and Saturday morning Pete left early in order to walk to her work. She was very good to look at as she swung along, tall and very slender, her boyish hips moving back and forth in the scarcely perceptible undulation that gave her an additional four or five inches on every stride. But she was troubled, and she was walking to straighten things out.

Eight—290 was diverting her mind from her work; rather, her work seemed to mean only 8—290 to her now. She was acting the fool, moreover. The previous day he had stooped for a fallen tool, and as he had returned it and their fingers had touched by chance, she, Pete Worth, had felt the color flaming in her cheeks. She had turned away, only to encounter Mrs. Carson's yellowish gaze, but that she had overcome by the fixed interrogation of her own.

And that night at the inn, she had aroused from broken slumber half smiling in the darkness, her lips still trembling from the pressure of a dream kiss. Save Billy Ware, no man had ever kissed her, but she did not try to conceal from herself the fact that she was ready now. She had no false modesty to be assuaged, but she felt a well-grounded fear. Love that comes of propinquity was a precarious thing, as she saw it. The animal instinct was bound to be prominent, and the intimacy and frequency with which two people met dulled their perception of

little nagging irritants that might appear later. Deadened sensibilities act as boomerangs—and Pete had no desire to be hurt.

She knew nothing of 8—290, not even his name. To do her justice, she did not care in the least whether he was of her set of people or not, but so that she might have happiness, he must be one on whom she could lavish her love and admiration and respect, such an one as Laurence Treadwell, so that when her work at the hospital was at an end, she might not turn back to the stale barrenness of the years before she had learned to give. He must be one to help her give. She felt that he could do this for her, but she must be sure.

And having so decided, she hurried faster and ever faster on her way to him.

She found him in the sun parlor. He helped her set out the paraphernalia for the day's work, and then, in a moment of quiet, he said suddenly:

"That is a very beautiful ring you wear. I've wanted a good look at it from the first day I noticed it. May I?"

Even for him the ring was not taken from her finger. He examined it silently. Then he asked abruptly:

"Why do you wear Laurence Treadwell's ring?"

Her breath caught.

"You—you knew him?"

"He was the best friend I ever had," he said gravely.

"What is your name?" she cried.

"John Cameron."

Vividly the memory of that hunted child she had been, shrinking from God and man, rose up before her, and her wild refusal to see Laurence Treadwell's friend who had come halfway across the continent to see her in her grief.

"So it was you," she said, looking at him as if he were a stranger to her

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and yet as if she had held the vision to her of what he might be all her life. "It was like you to come. But I couldn't see you then. I couldn't."

He looked at her, bewildered.

"I don't understand."

"Don't you know who I am?"

He shook his head.

"Just 'Ladywoman.' I haven't happened to hear your name, and somehow I hated to ask the boys."

"I'm Pete Worth, Laurence Treadwell's niece."

"You! You—Pete Worth!" His dark eyes swept her. "I might have known—you're so like him," he said slowly, and the girl thrilled as if an accolade had touched her. "I might have known."

That afternoon, as they rode through enchantment, she talked to him as she had not talked to any one since Laurence Treadwell's death. She revealed to him her desires and aspirations, delicate seeds of thought winter killed many years ago and now struggling into bud once more. She pleaded silently for his understanding as a gardener prays for the generous gifts of sun and rain. And when she saw that it was given her, she trembled at the wonder of it.

Treadwell had talked to Cameron of Pete even as he had told her about Cameron, and it was as if their knowledge of each other went back through the years. Confidence came into the girl's heart, a peaceful assurance that she had found the one man to lead her on into broad, generous paths of light. Serenely, almost without words, as if their mutual love for Treadwell formed a sacred bond, they acknowledged the union between them. Only once did he speak of the loss of his arm and of her "sacrificing herself to him," her look of anguish silencing him for all time. They talked endlessly of the mills and Pete's plan for employing disabled men to as great an extent as was possible.

And when they questioned or replied, it was the planning of two people whose lives are to merge happily, with mutual benefit, into each other's.

Romance must have been in the soft spring air, for the chauffeur, after a moment's fussing, admitted guiltily that they were out of gas and departed down the country lane to get it, whistling as he went. They were quite alone after his departure, and John Cameron's big arm went gently about her, drawing her close. And whether she feared to remind him of the loss of the hand that might have curled about her chin seeking the refuge of his shoulder, or whether her love was above all shyness, she lifted her face sweetly to his kiss.

A little later, they were dimly aware of a passing machine, but Major Armstrong was suddenly reminded of a girl long dead, whose face had worn for him the same high look that shone on Pete's face now, and Mrs. Carson, looking at the major for an answer to her caustic reference to broken laws, misunderstood and resented deeply his abstraction.

VI.

The next two weeks flew by on rainbow wings. As soon as he could get the discharge which some of his friends were trying to get for him, Pete was to marry John Cameron. It was not a relinquishment of duty, but an upward step into greater things. They had not taken any one into their confidence, and every minute they could get after hours, they spent together planning happily. Such a thing could not go unnoted, and Pete was on the carpet before Major Armstrong, who, sitting with Mrs. Carson's report before him, rated her soundly. She surmised the reason for his summons and, on the way to his office, half decided to tell him the news. Unfortunately a note of arrogance came into his voice—

no man quite understands a woman making a fool of herself over any other man—and she listened with the same cool-eyed calm that had exasperated her governesses in her childhood. She offered neither excuse nor comment and when she left the office, he had, for an officer who has done his bare duty, a quite unreasonable sensation of having been childish and absurd.

Then came the day when the whole hospital was in a flutter. Word had come that important visitors were actually in the grounds—two senators from the Middle West whose names loomed large in honorable men's estimation, officers hardly less great than the greatest from the surgeon general's office, and a tagging millionaire or two.

Mrs. Carson rushed into the ward, breathless with excitement. As she met Pete's amused look, she paused involuntarily. Then, with an acid smile, she fumbled in her apron pocket.

"It is my very unpleasant duty to give you this," she said and passed on.

Pete opened the letter slowly, and as she read, a heavy line grew between her blackly penciled brows.

She, Priscilla Worth, was dishonorably discharged from her country's service. Quietly she refolded the paper and put it into her pocket, standing back to permit the visiting officers and civilians to pass her. Major Armstrong, who accompanied them, threw an anxious glance at her, but she did not notice.

It took her minutes, long, sick, minutes, to realize what had happened to her. That a country whose battle cry was "Democracy" could make such a rabid distinction between grades of men seemed incredible. The only law she had broken was that against holding social intercourse with privates and non-coms. It was a fitting touch to the incongruity that John Cameron was

many times wealthier and better known than any officer at the station.

But he was rather worth a dishonorable discharge if it came to that, and she smiled.

"Pete!"

He was coming toward her, his face bright with pleasure.

"Daydreaming, Ladywoman? I want you to come meet some friends of mine."

He led her to the group of visitors. Keenly she glanced from him to them, and her heart leaped in exultation at the older men's manner of affection and respect toward him.

"This is Miss Worth," Cameron introduced her simply, "for whose sake any man in the ward would go through another war."

Unreproved, the boys in the background gave an approving cheer, and Pete laughed.

"Miss Worth?" repeated the ranking officer from the surgeon general's office. "What Miss Worth?"

"Pete Worth," Cameron supplied with a smile, and Pete added whimsically, "I sign my checks 'Priscilla Worth,' general."

"By Jove!" The white-haired officer approached and clicked his heels as he bowed over her hand. "And you have had the courage to back your money with service! Gentlemen," he turned to the others, "Miss Worth, of whose matchless generosity you must have heard!" He did not allow them opportunity of speech, continuing, "How long have you been here, Miss Worth?"

"About eight months."

"By Jove! And how long do you expect to stay?"

Pete glanced as if by chance at Major Armstrong and Mrs. Carson, standing side by side.

"I have just received my dishonorable discharge, general."

"What?" The red blood rushed

alarmingly into the old man's face and neck. "My God, madam, what are you saying?"

Pete's fingers closed around John Cameron's hand.

"For seeing too much of Mr. Cameron," she explained. "He's a private, you know. We're to be married very soon."

"Well, by Jove! I know that rule—but— Whose jurisdiction does this come under?" he roared.

Major Armstrong presented himself for the older man's furious inspection, and saluted.

"Did it ever occur to you, sir," and the loud voice was all at once deadly calm, "that even if you are a soldier, you might use discretion? Don't answer me, sir! Think it over!" He

turned to Pete. "I'll see that that fool action is retracted." His gaze went from the girl to Cameron. "So you're going to marry John, are you? By Jove!" He laughed. "I'd like to be at your wedding—yours and John's! Why don't you have it to-day?"

Cameron's arm went masterfully about the girl's shoulders.

"That's the idea, sir! We will."

There was a suppressed hubbub among the listening men, and after a whispered plea from Cameron, Pete laughed excitedly, her eyes brilliant and cheeks flushed.

"Why—all right, general! If you think you can manage it for us."

"Manage it for you!" he roared. "Manage it! By God, I'll court-martial the first obstructionist!"



A SONG OF LOVES MORTAL

SILVER and black moon patterns drawn on grass,
Your kisses, wine and wonder—till they pass;

The cardinal flower's slim, incredible flame,
Your body, that nor god nor Greek might shame;

An iris meadow, roofed with iris skies,
Gift of myself to love-athirsted eyes;

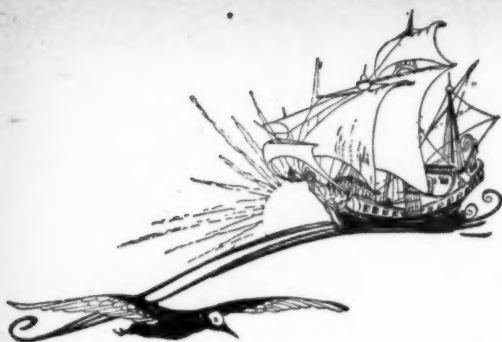
Brown boats on twilight seas of pearl and rose,
Love that in star-hung darkness comes and goes;

Laughter, brave, singing words, a singing wind,
Your eager flesh—your heart, if you be kind—

These joys I take—and jealous gods may keep
Eternity, and send me moth-winged sleep

If I, a mortal, love and beauty see
In rainbow, flame, and dream—to die, like me!

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



The Joyous Dreamer

By Vennette Herron

Author of "When Sirens Clash,"
"Lolita," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

EVERY one comes to New York some time, and Guy de Cartier, the Frenchman whom Richard had met on the steamer on his way to Panama, was no exception. He had been in the tropics for over a year, and he longed to get out on the Avenue and ogle the beautiful women. His beloved Paris would have suited him better, but he determined to see what New York had to offer. He had been there several times before, but only as a transient, and he had few acquaintances in the city, so it was with joy that he hailed Richard when he ran into him after a half hour of promenading.

"I hoped we'd meet again, monsieur—and we have," he said. "How are you, and have you made a fortune with your great Colombian mines?" Then his eye took in the signs of wear in Richard's apparel, and he was quick to note the barely perceptible embarrassment that followed hard on the boy's hearty greeting. "But of course you have not," he went on cheerfully. "One never does on mines. I should feel great chagrin, if you had, for I consider myself very clever and I could not do so. The things I tried, when I was a youngster like you, and the trials I had! *Mon Dieu*, but I was poor—like a rat! But it is good to be young, mon-

sieur, like you, and have a head full of plans. I wager you've tried a dozen things since. Ah, I know the course—just like me—and some day you'll succeed—just as I have done—and you'll go back to your own country and buy your family's house—as I am about to go back to restore our old château. But the days of the fight are good days, boy. Let us go in and drink—to the dreams of youth."

While he talked, with such charming camaraderie and with just a bit more of vivacity than was his wont, in his efforts to put the boy at his ease, Monsieur de Cartier hooked his arm through Richard's and dragged him along to the nearest café. He had taken a fancy to Richard on the boat; he was alone and in a mood for companionship; his trained eye had caught the other's plight, which was, in truth, very like his own of some ten or fifteen years before; and it was in his mind that here was opportunity to while away some pleasant hours and at the same time, perhaps, share a little of his own good luck with a congenial friend who stood in need of it.

They were well matched in spirit, these two, and after making allowances for certain racial differences, De Cartier was very like what Richard expected to be, if things went well with him, another ten years hence. The

Frenchman had, however, a warmth and possibilities of abandonment to emotion which Richard seemed not to have. At the end of an hour, they were merry together. Richard had spoken of Thérèse, De Cartier had begged for a presentation, and the outcome of the interview was that the older man had received the younger's invitation to call at his rooms that evening.

After he left De Cartier and started home, Richard felt a little dubious. He wondered if Thérèse would be upset by the arrival of a strange guest under such difficult circumstances. He reflected, then, how much his friend and the girl would have in common, and it suddenly came to him that, of all the men he had known, De Cartier was the one whom Thérèse would be apt to like best. Something in the thought made him smile and quicken his pace.

Upon reaching home, he said to Thérèse:

"I met a countryman of yours to-day—De Cartier, a remarkable chap. He's coming around to-night, and you'll like to know him. He's rather a big man in his way—has been all around the world and had his finger in one pie after another. He's by no means indifferent to women, but he's had enough of 'em to grow fastidious, and I fancy it would take a star now to bowl him over. In another six months, Thérèse, you'd be ripe to tackle him yourself."

"But you think I couldn't now?"

"Well, he's had a lot of experience."

Thérèse bit her lip and squared her shoulders, while she stared straight before her and, covertly, Richard smiled.

The girl dressed with even more than her usual care that evening, in a well-worn, but still effective, black dinner gown, and arranged candles about the sitting room to take the place of the glaring gaslights, which cast no kindly shadows over shabby details.

De Cartier came and was duly im-

pressed, for Thérèse sparkled and shone to the best advantage under the influence of her guest's subtle flattery and spurred on by Richard's veiled challenge.

This was the beginning of a delightful acquaintance. De Cartier was a man of the world, accustomed to considering any woman whom he wanted fair game, and it was not long before he decided that he wanted Thérèse more than he had ever wanted any other woman, and the pursuit began. He called again and again, sent gifts and provided entertainment, and it was soon obvious to Richard that the man was more than commonly in earnest.

De Cartier began the chase with some qualms of friendship, but they soon ceased to exist. Yet Richard's peculiarly indifferent attitude toward Thérèse did not lessen her value in the Frenchman's eyes, for he recalled his steamer talks with the young man and his own prophecy concerning the fate of the women who should love him.

"I like him, that boy," he said to himself, "but he will not suffer if I take her from him, and she must be taught what it is to be really loved."

Thérèse's mind was not so apparent. She took pleasure in De Cartier's society and went about with him a good deal, openly and without protest from Richard. But her attitude toward the boy remained what it had been, affectionate and solicitous for his welfare, and they continued to laugh and joke and enjoy themselves when they were alone together. The girl sometimes watched Richard curiously, as if she awaited some sign, but if he noticed it, he gave no answer to her unspoken query.

As soon as possible, De Cartier tactfully insisted upon a loan, which Richard eventually accepted, after which he bought fresh clothing and went to call upon Helen, who had come up to town

in answer to his letter saying that he was back in New York and wished that she were still there. He was received like a returning prodigal by her relatives, and it took only one visit for him to discover that it would require merely passive acquiescence on his part for him to resume his position as the girl's affianced lover. He made no mention of Thérèse to Helen, but told the former, frankly, that he had been to call on the latter.

"I'm so glad, Richard," Thérèse said with unruffled placidity. "You've been shut up so long with me that it'll do you good to get about and see something of your old friends. Run over often. Monsieur de Cartier will take care of me."

Richard did call several times, and found Helen each time more effusive. Still he managed to keep on without committing himself.

Then a wonderful thing happened. The novel was actually accepted by a magazine for serial publication, and Richard and Thérèse received the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars. There followed an evening of wild rejoicing. They made a little fiesta, just for themselves—went to dinner and a theater and supper and home in a taxicab, and behaved altogether like two happy children alone in a world made for them. But after they reached home, Richard spoke seriously:

"This is great, Thérèse, and I hope we'll get it out as a book and make a lot more. But you know, as things stand, we've got enough money to do something with, but not enough to live on very long. Now if you'll trust to me and promise not to worry, no matter what I appear to be doing, I think I can make something out of it."

"All right," said Thérèse, "go ahead."

The first thing Richard did was to stock up with clothes. He bought a fresh dinner suit and evening things, white flannels and yachting coats. He

insisted that Thérèse buy a few gowns, but did not urge her to extravagance.

"I hate to buy more than you," he said, "but my clothes are a part of my investment."

Then, instead of entering into any financial scheme, he plunged into a small social whirl. He wrote a great many letters and notes and occasionally made and kept a downtown appointment, but for the most part he drifted about, went to dinners and dances, and sometimes took a short cruise on a friend's yacht, leaving Thérèse in the care of De Cartier, who was daily growing more importunate.

Thérèse was puzzled. She tried to be patient, but this sort of thing went on for some time and still she received no explanation of the game that Richard was playing. One day a thought occurred to her and, that evening, as they sat alone together very late, smoking, she asked quietly:

"If I were not with you, Richard, do you think you might marry Helen?"

"Don't talk like that!" replied the boy irritably. "How do I know what I'd do? You are with me, and you're going to be with me. I think I'll have some good news for you in a day or two," he added more gently.

"Richard, I know you hate to have me ask, but I'm not doing it to be silly, so please answer this time. Honestly, when you make your plans for the future, do you always count me in them?"

"Certainly I do, Thérèse," he replied, with a sort of kindly indulgence that was convincing, but not satisfying.

Once she asked Betty, "Do you find it hard to get information out of Richard?"

And Betty replied, with girlish shrewdness and an obvious pride in her superior knowledge of the boy:

"Oh, Dick has a way of telling all he wants you to know, and if he doesn't tell of his own accord, you can ask till

the cows come home without finding out."

Another day, Thérèse said to Richard:

"How is it that you move us all about, like pawns, without explanation, and make us all do anything you like? I put up with it myself even when I see through your machinations."

"It doesn't matter what you see so long as my ends are accomplished," replied Richard, with one of his most impish grins, which turned to a chuckle at her petulant discomfiture. "Cheer up, honey," he laughed, "soon you'll have the trick, and because you're a woman, you'll be doubly dangerous. But don't be impatient. Don't rush things, and never use force when persuasion will answer."

"Richard," then said the girl, "sometimes I hate you, but I endure you, because I know you're good for me. You don't do what I want or give me what I want, but I have to admit that you've given me a lot that's valuable."

"Well, then, Thérèse, haven't I played fair? I can say honestly that I've never left a woman the worse for having known me. One I've taught how to dress, another how to behave, some I've helped financially, and others I've helped by giving them friends, position, teachers, one thing or another that they needed. Perhaps you think, because I laugh at everything, I haven't any ideals, but, my dear, I like to help people help themselves. I love to see others succeed. I've never left any woman at a time when she needed me—any more than I would a man—and no one has given me anything that she didn't want to give and take pleasure in giving. So I don't see but what I've done my part and used to the best advantage such gifts as I have." Richard spoke very gravely and looked with his wide gray eyes at Thérèse for approbation.

"Richard," said the girl, "right or

wrong, you're a dear. But what about those who have been hurt, not by the time, or by the manner, but by the fact of your becoming indifferent to them?"

"Oh, thunder!" said Richard earnestly. "There aren't any. They all liked me—do still—but nobody ever takes me seriously. You've often asked how I manage to get on so well with people. That's all there is to it. I give them all as square a deal as I can and am always perfectly natural."

"But that's not all. You've magic concealed somewhere, for even when your naturalness hurts, we all like you and serve you. You're like little Booze. Sometimes he growls and sometimes he's a nuisance and always he has his own way, but no matter what he does, he's soft and little and cute, and he only has to perform a trick or two to make slaves of every one. He could bite you and sit up and beg and you'd have to love him."

A few more weeks passed, during which Thérèse spent most of her time with De Cartier, for Richard was now seldom at home and always busy. And then, at last, he told her.

"Thérèse," he announced with solemn excitement, "I'm going to have my boat!"

"What—what do you mean?" gasped Thérèse.

"What I said. I'm going to have a big schooner and go trading in the West Indies."

"But how did you manage it?"

"Well, it's like this. I've tried first one thing and then another. I've had experience here and there, and I've made friends all about—wherever I thought they might be useful—but until now it hasn't got me anywhere. So I kept thinking it over this year, while things were going badly, and I made first one plan and then another, and I came to the conclusion that it was about time for me to gather up all the loose threads and weave them into a substan-

tial fabric. Then I thought over all the things that were possible, and talked about 'em and worked over 'em, and I thought a lot about myself and my own requirements, and I finally settled in my mind that the one prospect, within the range of possibilities, that would come the nearest to satisfying me was that of being master of a trading vessel. So I determined to let all the little things go and work for the main issue. That's why I seemed to be letting business slide sometimes."

"But why didn't you tell me—or talk to me about it—before?"

"Well, if I'm going to fall down on a thing, I don't want any one to know it, and I like to be recognized for what I've accomplished, not for what I intend to do. So I kept still and planned and waited for an opening and, when we got the money for the book, I went ahead."

"But I don't see how you managed it?"

"Well, I bought some clothes and then looked up all my old friends and got about. I made myself solid with chaps who owned yachts, because I thought I might persuade one to put his up for some sort of an expedition, and that way I got in touch with men who were interested in boats and who knew what good ones were for sale. Then I called on that importer—the old codger we met coming up on the boat—and he gave me a lot of dope and letters to different people, so that I found out about what I could do if I should succeed in getting the boat. All along I was making friends with men with money.

"At last I got wind of a boat—a hundred-and-sixty-foot schooner yacht—that was just what I wanted, and when I had looked her up and discovered who was her owner, I found that he was a nephew of Mrs. Collins, a dear old lady whom I used to know and who thinks I'm about right because I used go round

and talk to her and take her flowers and things once in a while. It wasn't a hardship, I assure you, because she's an old dear and her cook makes the most delicious cherry pie, but she thought it marvelous that I should give some time to an old woman.

"Well, I hunted her up and expressed a desire to meet her nephew. She was tickled to death to arrange it, and I found that we could come to terms all right. Then I thought I'd have the hardest time with the money, but, curiously enough, that was easy. As soon as I found out about what I could count on, I began to talk a little here and there about my trading scheme, and one day a chap I know told me of a man whom he thought might be interested. He gave me a letter to him, and now comes the strangest part. It seems that the man is a rather eccentric old duffer and he's pretty sick just now, from some sort of nervous breakdown. Anyway, I sent him my letter, which mentioned the fact that I was interested in boats and trading.

"Well, the old chap said he couldn't see me, but right off he was interested. He sent his secretary again and again to talk with me and wanted to know every detail of my plan. We hobnobbed through the secretary for some time, and then, the other day, he sent word that he's decided to take it up and put it through and that he'll see me personally just as soon as he's able. It seemed almost incredible, and I didn't dare base too much hope on it, but I made a lot of inquiries and everybody says that he takes streaks like that occasionally and that, if he's said he'll do it, it stands. Now what do you think? Isn't that better than the old Colombian deal? Jove, but I'm curious to see the old fellow!"

"I'm glad. Oh, I'm so glad for you, Richard!"

Then Thérèse sat silent for a space, while through her mind passed one

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thing after another. She remembered how once she had thought that everything Richard undertook must succeed through sheer luck, just because he seemed so confident and fortunate. Next, she thought of the glimpse she had had into his shrewd brain on the steamer. Then she recalled how he had grown to seem rather helpless and pathetic, struggling hopelessly in a foreign environment and laughing to keep up his courage. And now she saw that he could afford to laugh, for he had known—he must have known—that all things would come right for him. He could laugh when the Colombian proposition went to pieces because there was something better ahead. He could permit himself to be bored occasionally, knowing how the bores would serve his purpose. He could put himself out charmingly, in little ways, because all would be returned tenfold.

How carefully he had trained her to fit his needs, so that, chameleonlike, she reflected all his moods and demanded nothing that he was not ready to give! How cleverly he had brought in De Cartier, and manipulated Betty and Helen! How skillfully he had worked out everything from the beginning! But had he? Certainly he was always spontaneous, natural, even impulsive, apparently. Did he maneuver, like a veteran intriguer, or was he a spoiled darling of the gods, for whom everything came right by chance?

"Richard," she said, "everything falls into place—all things work together for you. Do you manage it deliberately, or do you always do the politic and right thing instinctively?"

Richard grinned.

"If I said I planned from the beginning, you'd be suspicious of all I say and do and constantly surmise designs where none existed. It's simply that I live consistently and, therefore, everything works out right. I told you I'd prove some time that I am consistent."

"But you do like to manipulate men's minds."

"Of course."

"You brought in De Carter deliberately, and hoped he'd fall in love with me."

"Thérèse, if the discovery that I use my brain, and that some of my words and acts have meaning, makes you so suspicious, it's a poor compliment to the men you trust."

"Logical," said Thérèse, "but not true. Didn't you bring him on purpose?"

"I'm not saying that I did, but if I did, would it have been a bad thing to provide you with some one who'd adore you and give you every luxury and position and travel and things you wanted, if I couldn't do it myself?"

Again Thérèse stared at the boy. He looked straight back into her eyes, his own gravely serious.

"Richard," she said, "is it really that you think a great deal of me, or did you want to be free?"

"Now," he answered irritably, "didn't I tell you you were suspicious? To tell the truth, I did get rather panicky myself at one point, but it was only a passing thought, and we don't have to consider any of it any more. Everything's all right, and we're going to have ripping times from now on."

"But we do have to consider it, Richard, because—I've promised to go with De Cartier, and to go to-night. You see, I didn't know how things were going—and it seemed to be the best thing for you, and the only way I could help."

"Well, it isn't necessary now," broke in Richard lightly. "So tell him to go to the devil."

"But, Richard, is that fair—when I've led him on and finally promised to marry him? And he would never have urged if you hadn't appeared so unconcerned."

"Oh, well, he'll get over it. No man ever suffers long from a broken heart."

"But, Richard, you wouldn't break a promise—even one made to a woman."

"I should hope not," replied Richard sternly, "but a woman's promises are always different. Thérèse, are you fond of Guy—more than you are of me?"

"Not more—yet—but I will be."

"Why?"

"Because he can give me more, and you've told me to think always of myself."

"It's true, dear. He has a title and estates and——"

"I don't mean that."

"Well, if it comes to companionship, I'm still——"

"You've taught me wonders, but I've graduated, and it's time I put my knowledge to the test."

"You think I can't appreciate you as he will?"

"You appraise me at more than my value, but, personally, you value me less. You've trained me well, Richard. Now I'll use what you've given me to hold this man."

"But why—why do you want him, instead of staying with me?"

"Because—sometimes I'm a little girl, but sometimes I'm a grown woman, and you're always just a sophisticated elf."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that a grown woman wants to be loved—wants to feel that she is all-important and necessary to some one, if only for a little while, and you're adorable and considerate in all that you do, but you never make one feel as if one were important to you. You have a good time playing with me, but I know all the time that as soon as I'm gone, you'll go right on playing with some one else—and you'll hardly notice the change."

"I don't see why you think that," said Richard, coolly reflective. "I don't talk about you're being necessary to me, because you're here. I only talk and plan about a thing when I haven't got

it, but that's no sign I don't enjoy it when I have. Don't you want to stay?"

"Richard, I feel as if you were meant to be free. You're like a wild bird. One can feed it and pet it and teach it to alight on one's hand, but when one ties it to a tether, it pecks at the cord until it is parted and then it flies away forever. No, Richard, I've got everything ready. In fact, I sent most of my things on this morning. I was only waiting to tell you good-by and—I think I'd better stick to my plan and go. I wish you all happiness and everything good and—if I can ever do anything for you, I want you to let me know. I've been happy with you, and I thank you for everything, but—I'd better go."

She crossed the room and took up her hat and wrap, which had been lying all of this time unnoticed beside her little traveling bag. Richard stood silent, his dreaming eyes fixed upon her. At last she was ready—slender, beautiful, and immaculate in black and white, like the Thérèse he had first seen. Then she looked again at the boy. If he suffered, he made no sign—just stood silently watching her. He looked so boyish and alone that Thérèse's heart misgave her. Had she made a mistake? A flood of hope surged over her and then receded. If he had been any one else, she could have felt that she was treating him cruelly and that he took it so, but remembering all that he had said and what he had done, she was afraid to believe. However, she could not forbear to take a final chance.

"Richard," she said, "if you'd ask me to—really ask me—I'd stay, although I know it wouldn't be the wisest thing."

"Thérèse," answered Richard with gentle dignity, "it's true that you have a wonderful opportunity in De Cartier. Why should I ask you to stay?"

It sounded very touching and noble, almost like a splendid renunciation. Thérèse took another look at the boy.

His face was grave and still. She came back to him and put her hands on his shoulders and looked straight into his eyes.

"Richard," she said, "tell me one thing. When you sail away on your boat—in your dreams—do you see yourself alone or with me?"

Richard was silent for a moment, regarding her lingeringly. Then his face broke into a smile.

"Thérèse," he said, "is that all you're going to ask me?"

"What do you mean?"

"Every one of the others asked something else."

"What?"

"Never mind. I will miss you, Thérèse. Good-by."

He held her in his arms and kissed her on lips and eyes, which were full of tears. Then he let her go.

"Have a good time, little playmate—and be happy," he said.

Thérèse kissed him again, then ran to the door. On the threshold, she paused and looked back.

"Richard, we've always laughed together," she cried gayly, "at this funny world and its ways. Laugh now!"

Richard smiled and kissed his hand to her. There were a click of heels on the stair, a soft frou-frou of silken skirts, a ripple of girlish laughter, and, as simply as she had come into his life, Thérèse passed out of it.

Richard remained staring after her. His face was rather white.

"Am I sorry—or am I glad?" he said. "Is it what I meant—or isn't it?"

Then he called Booze and settled himself in his big chair, with the little dog in his arms.

"The world is a queer place, Booze," he whispered in the wee beast's ear, "and women are the queerest things in it. De Cartier will marry Thérèse and worship her and make a fool of himself for a year, maybe; then he'll neglect her. But I would have been the same

for twenty years, if she had stayed. I just want to play through the world in peace, little doggins. Everybody likes me the way I am. Then why do they hammer at me to grow up and be different? Thérèse knew how to play with me, and she liked me at first because I was an elf, as she called it, and then she left me for the same reason, as nearly as I can make out. All the world seems in a conspiracy to make me struggle after something, but I believe the gods just meant me to play. Are they all right and I wrong, or are there too few of me?"

Richard went out to dinner soon, then returned and spent the evening alone in his rooms, with his dog and his pipe. At last he got into pajamas and opened his bed and then came back to his sitting room, to pace restlessly up and down, while his pet kept close at his heels. All of the windows stood open, and the air was fresh and mild, for it was spring now and a balmy one.

Suddenly the boy threw up his arms in a delicious, lazy stretch, while his face broke into a beaming smile that developed, at length, into a half-sheepish chuckle.

"Booze," he cried, catching up the dog and holding him aloft, "you can't talk, thank Heaven, so I'll tell you a secret! No matter how much you miss any one, it's always good to be free!"

Then, with his dog under his arm, he went to bed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The morning after Thérèse's departure, Richard received a message from Mr. Graham, the capitalist who had consented to back his project, saying that he would see him for a little while that day. The hour stated was three o'clock in the afternoon, so Richard spent the time between coffee and dressing in composing a letter. He worked hard over it, with his mouth screwed up

into a pucker, as always, when he was forced to do planning on paper. At last it was finished. It read:

DEAR HELEN: We seem to be fated, you and I. When I left you, over three years ago, it was with confidence that I would be coming back soon, with my fortune made and no need to be dependent upon any one. And then, when I met you again this winter, I thought that perhaps— But again it is not to be. Things have not gone as I expected, and this time I shall probably be gone several years. I'm leaving at once, and haven't even time to see you again, since you are no longer in New York. Nor can I give you any address, at present, other than my bank here, for I am to be skipping from place to place.

If things had gone differently and I could have remained here, I would have seen more of you and possibly could have persuaded you— But no. Now I am signed, bound, and delivered to be an official vagabond for some years to come—a life well suited to me, but impossible for any woman.

And so good-by. When you marry some lucky devil, save a place for me by your fireside, and when I return, ten years hence, I'll come to sit there and tell tales about my wanderings to your children. Good-by, little sweetheart.

DICK.

"That ought to satisfy any girl, no matter what she's been led to expect," said Richard, as he signed and sealed the letter and addressed it to Helen Grant. "It would be awful if she got some romantic notion about waiting for me again—or coming after me. Jove! But I fancy, when her mother hears what I've done, she'll have sense enough to settle Helen. I had to make the poor little girl comfortable by letting her believe that I'm not so. Well, I wonder what's going to turn up next."

Whistling cheerfully, Richard started out to keep his appointment and mailed his letter by the way.

Mr. Graham's house was far up on Fifth Avenue, and Richard discovered it to be a most imposing mansion. The door was opened by a pompous footman in black-and-silver livery, and the boy was turned over to another correctly garbed lackey, who conducted

him up a broad marble staircase, through a suite of luxurious rooms, to the cozy sitting room where Mr. Graham waited, propped up in a cushioned armchair, to receive him.

"This is mighty good of you, Mr. Graham," Richard began cordially as he entered—and then stopped stock-still in surprise, as he found himself opposite his host. For the iron-gray hair, the haggard, white-faced weariness, the dark, brooding eyes, were all features which, while infinitely more pronounced and harassed by illness than they had been a year and a half before, were still recognizable. It was the man who had come up to him in Delmonico's—the man who had told him to go on dreaming.

"You!" exclaimed Richard in astonishment.

"Well, well," said the older man, in his dull, apathetic, invalid's voice, tinged with a slight accent of pleasure, "it's the boy of dreams—and he's followed my advice, I see, and kept on dreaming."

"And always will, sir," replied Richard, still a little bewildered.

"Sit down," said Mr. Graham, with an embryonic gesture of his thin white hand. "What will you take, sir? Brandy and soda? Thompson, cigars, brandy, and soda. You'll pardon me—doctor won't permit me to indulge myself—but go ahead and smoke, Mr. Montgomery. It does me good to see you. Now, then, to get down to this plan of yours. Perhaps you thought it strange that I promised to back it without seeing you, but somehow the way you put it in your letters— You seemed to have set your heart on it so.

"You've a gift, boy, for making the things you want sound feasible. I assure you, you almost made me believe that I could make a fortune out of you, although I know it's more or less of a damn-fool proposition. But I had somewhat the same idea myself once—

many years ago at a time when I needed to have ideas—and I couldn't put it through. I suppose that's why it struck me that I'd like to see what you could do. I got to thinking about how I would have felt if some one had made my dreams possible for me, before it was too late, and I decided that I'd reached the point where I could afford to let myself indulge a foolish fancy. There—you've heard enough of a sick man's ramblings. Now let's get down to business. The first question I want you to answer is——"

For two hours they talked boats, cargoes, possibilities, ways, and means, and Richard saw, to his satisfaction, that although the man had allowed himself to be carried away by a caprice, he had no desire to pose as a fairy godfather or a philanthropist, but went into all the details with a shrewd eye on the profits to be made, and that it was his intention to conduct the affair in a calculating, purely businesslike way.

When Mr. Graham indicated that the interview was over for that day, Richard rose.

"I hope I haven't overtired you, sir," he said, with youthful courtesy.

"No, no," replied his host. "You've done me good. I've had nothing to think about for a long time now." And then, with his unfathomable dark eyes resting gravely on the boy, he concluded, "I hope you'll get out of it what you anticipate—and more. I, too, once longed to live upon the sea."

That was all—"I, too, once longed to live upon the sea." But with the words there came to Richard a vision of strong desires unfulfilled, dead now and incapable of resurrection, of a great brain and soul hampered and frustrated by ties and sorrows, of a life hardly lived and now the end in sight with no compensating memories and no hopes for the future. What the tragedy had been that had wrecked this man Richard would never know, but the feeling of

the tragedy was his, for the moment, and a lump came into his throat. But he gulped it back and said, with eager, boyish impulsiveness:

"I say, Mr. Graham, you're so fond of boats—and there's nothing so good for convalescence. Couldn't you take a trip with me when I get started?"

The man smiled sadly and shook his head.

"I'm afraid it's too late for me, boy. I'm past wanting to go. But get out of it all you can—and keep your fancies."

And thus it was that, after several more months of dicking and working, hoping and preparing, Richard slipped the coils with which the world had tried to bind him and came into his own again, as merrily and as carelessly as if he had never known anything else, and he and Booze sailed away on the ship of dreams, carrying their first cargo to the West Indies.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Far in the distance, thunder clouds were gathering, the Fates were engrossed with terrible preparings, and Richard was left alone, free and at peace. Before the breaking of the storm that was to sweep disaster over the world, he cut out for himself one perfect year. With his dog as his companion and his boat—which he had renamed, half ironically and half wistfully, the *Thérèse*—as his beloved mistress, he wandered through tropical waters, drifting as the winds of chance blew, transporting, trading, treasure hunting, adventuring, prospering—to the extent of keeping up the life that he had chosen in a luxurious, carefree, rollicking fashion—and asking for nothing more.

From port to port he went, gathering treasure and culling pleasure all along the way. There were madcap pranks and fevered games and nights of love

ashore, with long intervals of dreamful solitude between, for Richard, who knew not the meaning of fidelity to woman, kept faith with his boat, and the sea, which cradled them both, knew the greatness of the poet which the world would never know. So the golden days slipped by softly, one after another, like beads told off on a rosary; for to those who feel it so, life at sea is a worship and a prayer.

And then the unbelievable, the incredible, actually came to pass, and the world was at war. Richard was winding a course among the smallest and least-known islands of the Caribbean at the time, and although rumors sifted through to him, it was weeks before he reached a place where they could be authenticated, and by that time the march to Paris had been checked, great battles had been fought, and the world rocked in chaos. The knowledge of all this affected Richard strangely, yet not inconsistently; for he, who insisted upon the abstractness of all that to others would have seemed personal, exclaimed, when he learned the reality of this mighty cataclysm, "At last! I have my chance!" And this was just what the news meant to innumerable exiled adventurers all over the globe.

With all speed, then, Richard hastened to New York, turned the *Thérèse* over to her owners—with a last lingering look, such as a man bestows upon his bride before going into battle—and set sail for England. There he took his place among the atoms in the seething vortex of war, and became lost to sight as an individual.

Three years passed by. It was spring. For the third time, the patient earth was spreading pale, fresh green to cover the scars which winter and men had made. *Thérèse*, la Comtesse de Cartier, stood in the arched window of the tower chamber in her old gray château, and gazed across a sweep of

park and plowed field to where the sea sparkled, brightly blue. She was paler, thinner, less exuberant, but lovelier—with the loveliness of perfect poise—than she had been when she had left Richard and married Guy de Cartier, four years before. She was dressed in the garb of a nurse and held a small tray of dressings in her hand. In the courtyard below, an ambulance had just arrived with a fresh load of wounded, who were now being carried gently into the house. For *Thérèse*, of course, was doing her part, and this, her country home, was one of the best-equipped and most efficiently managed of the many private hospitals established in France. In a moment she must descend to the routine of ministrations with which she filled her days, but for just a second, she paused at the top of the stairs and, looking across the land to the dazzle of water, beheld again the glittering shores of San José and caught an iridescent flash from the bubble of happiness.

"Madame—Madame la Comtesse!" called an importunate voice from below, and *Thérèse* went down.

Quietly she moved from room to room, giving orders, assisting the doctors, adjusting pillows, speaking words of hope, followed everywhere by grateful and admiring eyes. At length she paused beside a cot whereon lay a still figure, completely covered by a sheet.

"Is it—too late—for this one?" she inquired, in a soft undertone, of a young American nurse who was working over a patient in the next cot.

"He is unconscious, and it seems to be a hopeless case, but the doctor will reach him in a moment. We can do nothing until then," replied the nurse, while her hands continued to move deftly at their appointed task.

Thérèse stepped closer.

"It is not—his head?" she asked pitifully. It was one of her terrors, the sight and then the ever-recurring mem-

ery of those faces which even mothers might not recognize.

This time, however, the nurse shook her head in denial, and Thérèse, moved by a compassionate impulse, lifted a corner of the sheet and bent over the quiet form. Then she uttered a strangled cry, the first that her coworkers had heard from her lips, and sank to her knees beside the bed.

"Richard—Richard!" she crooned, and spread protecting arms above him, without touching him, for fear of crushing out the small spark of life that might be left. Then she lifted agonized eyes to the nurse, who had started up in amazement at the sound of the cry. "Fly!" she commanded. "Doctor Bonnard—tell him to come—to leave everything—instantly!"

The girl, scenting horror, did as she was bid.

In a moment, the great doctor, the head of Thérèse's staff, stood beside her.

"He—this man——" began Thérèse a little incoherently, and then went on, gloriously regardless of everything but her grief, "This man must be saved! Think of nothing else—of no one! Save him!"

Very gently the surgeon stepped between Thérèse and the cot, shutting out sight of the wounded man, while he made his examination. More gently still, he replaced the sheet, drawing it up to Richard's chin, and turned to the trembling woman who stood behind him.

"Dear madame," he said, "it is of no use. I could only torture him. It is kinder not to disturb him."

"Oh, oh!" Thérèse moaned, and swayed, dry-eyed, backward and forward. The doctor caught her by the arm and steadied her.

"Will he—wake—first?" she asked pathetically.

"It is possible," replied Doctor Bonnard. "I can not say."

"Then," she said swiftly, and with a magnificent revival of strength and calm, "he must be moved. It would not—not hasten—the end?"

"No—not if he is moved with care." Doctor Bonnard was a Frenchman and tender toward love.

But the woman's next statement surprised him.

"He must be put," said Thérèse, "where he can see the sea, if he wakes, and where things will be beautiful."

In a few moments the arrangements were made, and Richard, still on the litter that had borne him into the château, was carried up the long stone stairs into the room in the tower which had been Thérèse's own refuge. There he was laid, litter and all, for he could not be lifted from it, upon a great, silk-covered divan. The orderlies and the doctor withdrew; the gruesome, heart-rending, merciful work went on below; and Thérèse was alone with—all that remained of Richard.

A soft spring breeze blew in through the open casement and stirred the gauze curtains. It was a beautiful little room—yellow, orange, gold, and flower-scented. Thérèse caught up a great embroidered, fringed crêpe shawl and spread it over Richard, covering everything except his face. At thirty-eight, his was still the face of a boy. There was that glamour of youth, gayety, and innocence about the brow which even very worldly men sometimes retain and which so touches the women who love them. Only the mouth betrayed the man's experience. Thérèse knelt by the couch and waited.

Hour followed hour and no one came to disturb them. Morning passed, then noon; the shadows began to lengthen, and the room was filled with the cool, green-gold light and the half-melancholy, half-sweet foreboding of that still hour of late afternoon, just before the setting of the sun. As quietly as

after a peaceful sleep, Richard opened his eyes.

"Thérèse!" he said weakly, but with an accent of pleasure, as if she had returned after a short separation. Then he woke a little more and memory stirred. "Where am I?" he asked. And last, with the faintest echo of his old merry chuckle, he added, "There! For once I've been utterly trite!"

Thérèse had spent the passing hours schooling herself to endure tragedy, despair, fear, anything but this. The entire, unbroken naturalness of him tore her heart. The tears poured down her cheeks, and she buried her face in the pillow beside him.

"You're in my house, Richard darling," she sobbed, "and I'm going to take care of you."

"I might have known that I could count on you to be there when I needed you, Thérèse." And then, "Oh, God, but it was hell!" So memory spoke once more. "Why are you crying so hard, dear? Is it because—I suppose—it's the end? But I don't mind. I don't seem to feel much of anything," he went on cheerfully, trying to help, as she quivered in her effort to regain self-control.

"Dearest, dearest!" She brooded over him, kissing him softly on eyes and lips. "I'm going for the doctor. You can talk. You are here. It can't be— You can stay with me—can't you?"

"Stop, Thérèse!" Very, very feebly Richard freed one hand from the enshrouding coverings. "Stay! I know it's no use—and it's so much better. You wouldn't have me stay and not be—whole. God, not that!"

Thérèse sank down again, with her arm folded over him as softly as the wing of a mother bird.

"I'm with you, Richard," she said and smiled, the bravest smile of her life.

He was silent then, for a space, with

closed eyes, but quite conscious and gathering strength. At last he looked at her again.

"Where's Guy?"

"I don't know—at the front." She brushed her husband aside.

"You remember San José?" His eyes sought the open air.

"I was thinking of it this morning," she said.

"We were so happy, weren't we, Thérèse? I believe I must have loved you."

She drank his words and did not dare to speak, and he went on:

"I loved my boat, and I called her *Thérèse*."

The real Thérèse kissed his hand.

"The world is changing so. A new time is coming—after this war. It had begun before. I'm glad I shall not be here. Perhaps it's right, but I should be an anachronism, obsolete—I and others like me—and I loved my own time. You understand? Democracy everywhere—looks gray to us—but we have to die and make way." More silence, and then, "Thérèse—the world doesn't want us—to be happy—but—she wants us to be great."

Thérèse looked deep into his eyes, turning her heart out for him to see.

"Richard, I belong to you—and to your time. I'm coming with you."

But with the arrogant simplicity with which he had always governed the lives of others, Richard denied her now.

"No, Thérèse," he said. "You can't be spared. You women of France have work to do." And so he made her greater, as he made all of those whom he hurt.

There was another stillness.

"No band—no fighting—no boat," Richard said at last, with his first bit of conscious pathos.

Thérèse knew what it meant. She waited as long as she could, knowing well that movement would bring the end, but knowing, too, that she must

bravely make it beautiful. The sun was setting, and the spark was flickering out.

"Richard my dearest," she whispered, "would it help if you could look at the sea?"

Out of the grim furrows, straight from the heart of the pagan child, came an ineffable smile.

"Yes," breathed Richard.

Thérèse slipped her arm beneath his shoulders, exerting all her strength, and raised him, slowly and evenly, until his head came above the casement.

"Thank you, Thérèse," he murmured,

his eyes on the water, glowing rose and purple and gold. "I loved—to stand—now—at the wheel. Good-by, sea."

She held him a little longer and then laid him down. The room had grown dusky with shadow.

This was the end of Richard. Only he himself knew what were the dreams in his heart, but to those who loved him, it seemed that he took something of beauty and romance away with him, that the world was made colder, less adorned, and a little gray and empty by his passing.

THE END.



TRANSPARENCY

BECAUSE you were yourself unchangingly
 I cannot call to mind your eyes and hair—
 I think it must be that your face was fair—
 I know your lips were wonderful to me,
 But I cannot remember them. I see
 More clear the masks that other natures wear
 And give them thanks for Beauty; but I dare
 Not seek to treasure in forms that vision free.

Only—I know that, after years of strife,
 Encountering you, I came upon a spring
 That whoso drinks of shall not thirst again:
 That, looking upon you, I saw you plain
 And understood that very simple thing
 That babes and sucklings know—eternal life.

SYDNEY OLIVIER.

TIGER LILY

By Walter Adolphe Roberts

GRAY are the gardens of our Celtic lands,
Dreaming and gray,
Tended by the devotion of pale hands,
On barren crags, or by disastrous sands,
That night and day
Are drenched with bitter spray.
There rosemary and thyme are plentiful,
Larkspur that lovers cull,
Love-in-the-mist that is most sorrowful.
Flowers so wistful that our teardrops start. . . .
Scarcely one understands that regal, rare,
Bravely the tiger lily blossoms there,
Bravely apart.

Our gardens are enamored of the spring,
Of silver rain,
The cloudy green of buds slow-burgeoning,
The sorrow of last apple blooms that cling
And are not fain
To yield their fruit again.
We do not long for tropic pageantry,
Yet surge with love to see
The tiger lily's muted ecstasy.
Watered by mist and lashed by wind-blown rime,
She is no alien thing; but vivid, free,
She has no heed for paler rosemary,
Larkspur or thyme.

It is in vain they worship her who knows
Pity nor pride.
Their petals whirl down every wind that goes
South to the palms or northward to the snows,
Mourning they died
So distant from her side.
But the brave tiger lily blossoms on,
Never to be undone
Till the last rosemary and thyme are gone.
Tattered by autumn storms, she will not fling
Herself to sullen foes. The winter rain
Alone can beat her down, to bloom again
Spring after spring.



Preparatory to Surrender

By Maude Barragan

I SHALL kiss you!"

Imperiously Hempstead Browne swept Cynthia Morrison's hands from her face. His quizzical, cynical manner dropped from him like a garment.

"And if I say you *shan't*?" queried the woman, unafraid.

She drew back with a laugh and leaned her gleaming arms on the stone coping. A round white moon showed a bland face of kindly indulgence; in its light, her gown shimmered iridescently, and diamonds of light pointed the shadowy masses of her hair.

In front of the hotel, a pale ribbon of beach wound by, and the incoming tide surged against its margin; a salt wind whipped through the veranda, and from the ballroom lilted a waltz.

Browne's hands clamped Cynthia's shoulders, pressing into the soft flesh.

"I don't usually have to take kisses," he told her with elaborate sureness. "Do you know you are making a fool of me?"

"Then I would but finish what God began," she flashed.

His grasp tightened.

"You're the only woman who ever looked at me like that and laughed," he said. His eyes glowed into her amused ones. "You're a beautiful woman—and if you won't kiss me, I shall kiss you, whether you wish it or not!"

He was in earnest, determined to conquer her indifference, to teach her that she could not baffle him. Conquests had always been easy for Hempstead Browne. His arms pulled the girl toward him; her head, with its wind-whipped strands of gleaming hair, brushed his shoulder. But her slim grace was strength of steel. She resisted his clasp tautly and, with a wrenching movement, burst free and leaned breathlessly against the coping.

"You shall not."

The chill of her voice pierced his ego; her eyes caught his, held them—still unafraid. Beneath the scorn in her face, he dropped her eyes.

Browne was a handsome man, of around forty, with a courtly grace with which he handled women. It was not a common thing for a woman to resist him. His mouth was strong, but showed in its tightened lines something of what he had learned of the world and its people. He had a dare-devil charm that won women while they feared a lurking satan in him. He had not come in contact with many women of Cynthia's type. This slim slip of a woman, with her gleaming red-gold hair and boyish eyes, her smooth, pale skin and tempting mouth, attracted and mystified him.

"Would you care to tell me why you won't kiss me?" He had suddenly become himself; once more the courtly,

apparently chivalrous manner had wrapped itself around him. "You are beautiful. Surely men have tried many times to kiss you?"

Cynthia laughed at that.

"Rather tell me why you wished to kiss me," she countered.

"Oh"—he shrugged—"because you are beautiful—and a woman——"

"Exactly!" Cynthia capped his sentence. "Because I am a *woman*—nothing more; not because you thought you loved me, or because I resisted you—but because——"

"Well?" he prompted.

"Oh, you wouldn't understand!" The childishness of her slumped shoulders roused a real chivalry in him.

"Try me?"

She looked out over the water.

"In my thirty-three years——" She nodded. "Oh, yes, I confess—though I hope I don't look it." She withdrew from him spiritually. "In all my life, I have never allowed any man but dad to kiss me."

Browne laughed.

"Want me to believe that?"

"You don't have to." She was angry now. "It's true. I've never played with love. I wanted it to be fresh—with the bloom on—and I held men off, because"—she stammered—"because, for one thing, no man ever touched the spring—and because when the right man came along, I wanted him to find my ideals white and shining."

Browne studied her curiously.

"But, my dear girl, men don't appreciate that," he said soberly. "A man expects that the girl he marries will have been kissed by other men—as he has been kissed by other women. You're wasting good time."

Cynthia shrank.

"Oh, surely not! I don't want to believe that. I want to find a man with ideals as high as mine!"

Browne's hands closed over hers quietly.

"Some day, my girl"—his voice was tired—"when your lips no longer glow redly—for youth dies like flowers—you will know that you've missed something without which life's experiences will have been incomplete." His eyes saw distances. "I've played with many women—none like you."

His eyes now looked directly into hers. She felt, indeed, that his youth was dead—and buried under it were the ideals of his boyhood.

Cynthia, who saw clearly, felt that Browne had once possessed to an unusual degree the power to feel beauty, to sense the purity of a woman's love, the motherhood of her nature, and that he had sacrificed it for lesser things. She hotly rebelled against conditions that could leave a woman untouched, with shining ideals, at thirty-three, and a man of his type cynical and world-wise at forty.

Without even a smile, she left Browne, who stood quietly gazing over the moon-silvered water; and it was with relief that she greeted young Washburn, an ardent summer lover. Yet, as she slipped into his arms for a swinging dance, there dwelt within her a warm glow that had resulted from Browne's steadfast gaze. Cynthia was afraid.

Washburn's clean youth was tonic for her to-night. Out of her summer collection of hearts and men, he was the only one who had appealed to her. He had come back from France with eyes that were opened to many, many things, but he had kept clean the touch of mysticism with which his Irish mother had endowed him, the power to look over and beyond and measure things for himself.

After the evening's revels, Cynthia sat in her window, wrapped in a comfort, for the air was chilly, and faced her life.

Waves in lacy nightcaps plashed softly, like a velvet pad, against the

and; one by one, fingers of light disappeared from the water as the hotel darkened for the night.

Once more, Cynthia heard Browne's voice as he had spoken what she felt was the knell of her youth:

"When your lips no longer glow redly—for youth dies like flowers—you will know that you've missed something without which life's experiences will have been incomplete."

Would she? Was love going to pass her by? No—she felt the thrill in the memory of Browne's eyes gazing into hers. Love was coming to her—but, oh, this was not the way she had planned it! She could not give to this man the thing she had guarded so carefully all her life. Yet would she kneel forever at her altar, tending her lamp unseen? She was still a lovely woman—her mirror told her that—yet there were wrinkles beneath her eyes, devastating hollows in her erstwhile perfect neck—and Browne—yes, he had stirred her, for the first time in her life!

With a passionate aching, she contrasted his tired eyes with the honesty of young Washburn's gaze.

"Oh," thought Cynthia, "if only I had married when I was eighteen—a boy like Washburn!" She shivered. "Yes, Hempstead Browne will reverence a good woman—I know it—but it would be a compromise, and I wanted it to be something perfect!"

Cynthia, feeling cheated, cried softly to herself.

The next day was Saturday, her last day at the shore, and she gowned herself carefully for the usual hop. A green gown brought out the red in her hair, which was loosely coiffed, spilling little red-gold curls around her face. She did not look more than twenty-four.

Smilingly she greeted Washburn.

"Sea nymph," he whispered. "Was ever a woman so lovely?"

She smiled, a mystic, uplifted look in

her eyes, but when Browne led her to the veranda, and she felt again his searching gaze upon her, she drew back, afraid. She did not want him to speak to-night. She would not let him speak until she returned to town. She knew now that he loved her, that she had called forth in him a banished ideal; she knew, too, that with the surrender of some of her idealism, she would lose her grip on that cool aloofness which had been her armor. She looked into Browne's serious face. There was charm about him. It was going to be a surrender—but now she longed to compromise.

She played him dexterously, yielding not an inch. The music caressed them, and the moon looked on and laughed.

Cynthia was to dance next with Washburn. She met him with a calm radiance. He was big and boyishly unspoiled; there was a satisfying clench to his square jaw.

"Oh, boy," she thought within herself, "if *only* I had met a man like you ten years ago!"

"Shall we sit it out?"

He did not await her answer. She found herself in a corner of the veranda, where the boom of the surf reached them like a symphony.

Washburn turned upon her suddenly, his arm clasping her. For a moment her heart stopped beating. She could not let this boy kiss her—it wasn't fair. She glanced up at his strong face, noting the lift of his chin, the line of his nose and cheek.

For a moment he held her tightly. It was then that she should have drawn away—but she did not. She *wanted* this boy to kiss her; she wanted to give to him, and not to Browne, the first kiss of her life.

She surrendered to the temptation without further fighting.

And Washburn kissed her, at first half afraid, like a man who dares not take what is offered him; then tightly,

tensely, he held her to him, and his young mouth pressed hers.

"Will you marry me?" asked Washburn, when the storm was over. "You know I love you."

"No, Jack," said Cynthia sadly. "It's too late for me. Find a girl nearer your own age. I am thirty-three."

She stilled his protest with a firm negative.

"No, Jack, it's too late. Let us dance."

As they passed Browne, on their way to the ballroom, he detained Cynthia with his hand.

"I'm going home to-night," he said

in a low voice. "Business is calling me, but I'll come to you in town, if you will allow me. But meanwhile I want to tell you something. I have found, through you, a thing I lost as a boy—my faith in women."

She looked into his eyes, and then glanced toward Washburn, who was coming back to her. And as the boy's arms closed about her, Cynthia smiled at Browne, a mysterious, lilting smile, teasing the dimples in her cheeks.

"Yes, I'll be glad to see you in town," she threw at him over her shoulder, and then they danced away from the man in the shadow.



A SONG OF PARTING

LET the leaves fall and let the rose wreath slipping
From your cold brows foretell the end of all;
So this is love, a sun and then rain dripping.
Let the leaves fall.

Braid your hair now, and dream no more of roses.
Let the wind blow, the wild sea waters call;
Let the night come nor fear what day discloses—
Let the leaves fall.

Lay your head down and hush all idle weeping;
Close your eyes now and wait the end of all;
Let the noise die, and lull your heart to sleeping
As the leaves fall.

MARYA ALEXANDRINE ZATURENSKY.



The Meeting

By Muna Lee

A THOUSAND times she had pictured their meeting; for that they should meet sooner or later was, of course, inevitable. Of her own self-command she felt little doubt, for at any given moment preparation for the crisis was in formulative process in the back of her mind; but she could count less surely on him, since he had no way of knowing how likely their casual meeting had become, and since she would have to reckon with his quick emotionalism; that ready rush of feeling which had charmed and melted her because of its unlikeness to the reserves and withdrawals she had always known.

There were so many things he might do! If only he, too, had had a Scotch grandmother! He might even be angry. She smiled a little over that, rather enjoying the idea. She had never been afraid of his tempestuous angers. Artistically she built up the scene to her fancy. Suppose it were at Edith Barr's, and she were talking to Albert Dana; once before, in another city, he had been jealous of Albert Dana, whose white hairs should have been a guarantee against suspicion, it had seemed to her at the time. What would he do? Flirt outrageously with a girl across the room, and pretend not to see? Certainly not the latter—he would wish her to know that he saw; and as for flirting outrageously, he would do that anyway, she thought almost gayly. As if she had minded that evening at the Hortons'. As if she could have been jealous of any woman who would wear such a shade of pink as had been chosen by that Indiana poetess with the bad teeth!

But that he would pretend indifference long was hardly to be believed. He might cross over to them and interrupt Albert Dana in the midst of expansive speech—she half shuddered at the unpleasant memory of another interruption—with a sudden angry demand:

"How are you here?"

Very well, she would meet that with an equal anger.

"I believe you hardly have a right to inquire!" she would flash back—for, after all, that other grandmother had been from County Clare. Then, serenely, to Albert Dana:

"Will you show me the carvings?"

It might be in a crowded room that some one would ask about her plans, and he would look up, thunder-struck, catching her name; so that she might answer easily, smiling across at him:

"My coming here is really due to Mr. Roche!"

And she could continue laughing within herself to see him grow suddenly rigid with wonder of what she would say next. "We happened to meet him at Pass Christian last summer; and one evening my father and he got into an argument over the references to Melos in the Ion. Later, my father had me look up some old notes and revived his own interest enough to write an article on the subject. Dr. Jacobs saw the article, and wrote daddy about it. And then, when the doctor learned of my small part in the matter, he asked me to come pay his wife a visit and do a little of the research work for his next volume. The doctor's eyes are so very bad! My father was pleased and so was I, for he would never in the world have

let me come for anything else! So I am very grateful to Mr. Roche for disagreeing with daddy!"

But all that seemed heavy and not quite convincing. It might be in the street that he would see her, and cross over and be at her side before she knew of his nearness. After all, that was what she feared most. Then he would peep beneath her hat brim to be sure it was she, and there, in the isolation of the Avenue, what could she say? Should she look at him for an instant and pass on? But that would in itself be a confession of defeat. It would be better to extend her hand in frank greeting. She frowned thoughtfully. To use his first name or decline to use it seemed equally absurd. Fortunately, "you" was noncommittal in English. If only he could be depended upon to answer in kind! She knew his sardonic impatience of her formality with him too well to believe that he would accept matters so.

Ah, well, once he had thought her less proud than he. As if it had not been her great vain glory to lay aside for him that pride which held others where she wished. He should see!

"My pride is not like yours," she had told him then. "It doesn't matter to me if the waiter goes first to another table. Why should it? But if I told you I would never see you again—I would never see you; that's all."

And he had looked at her curiously for a moment.

"Not even if I caught hold of you and made you look?" he had asked.

"No."

And an instant later he had added: "You see you will make yourself very unhappy."

She had never said she would not see him, she reminded herself coldly. Why should she hesitate to meet him? She had not been guilty of wrong to him, even in her thought. Let him be afraid. He should see whether her

pride would fail. She thought all at once of a boy who had faced her angrily and whose reproaches had died in his throat before her quiet, smiling answer. What right had any one to reproach her? It was certain that every man got his just deserts, surely she had paid for so slight a sin as credulity, paid to the last tear, without whimpering. Let him pay for his graver faults. Let it hurt him!

Though, she admitted to herself unhappily, she would care if he were hurt. (She would be frank with herself at least.) But it was he who was responsible; she could not shield him. He had made the decision that set them apart; and her decision had been to accept his without a word. If his decisions were fluent, changing things, he should learn that hers stood!

Perhaps he would be with Averil Pope. That would be a joyous thing to face. Averil Pope was anxious to meet her, she knew. Her curiosity would meet its match. She could hear herself:

"Last summer I talked with Mr. Murray, Miss Pope, just a few days after your sketches had come to his office. You are a great favorite there. It's a pity you've never visited us."

Though Averil Pope were really as lovely as the tall, flaming gladiolus to which he had likened her, she was not afraid of that loveliness. For in her heart Averil Pope stood condemned of trickery and deceit—and supreme confidence needs neither, she told herself proudly. Averil Pope was right to be curious. Let them both find how generous she could be! He, standing there, watching to see which of them proved mistress of the situation—he should find out! All the saints together would fight for her! That would be triumph not marred by her own heart crying pity for him. No! If she met them both, they would find her too indifferent for anger, even for dislike.

While sitting in the park, she might look up, and there, across the way, find him regarding her with that long, direct gaze with which he had looked at her first. She shivered a little, remembering that first look. It was hard to remember it and disbelieve. Then he had indicated lightly the empty chair at his side, and she had sunk into it with a sudden sense of perfect peace. If he made that gesture now, what should she do? Rise quietly and walk away? Look, and wait for him to act? She could see in fancy how his eyes would change, would flash into that imperious pleading which it seemed impossible to deny. (What was that line of Chatterton's—"King Edward's soul rushed to his face?")

"Your face is silent," he had told her. And once, pettishly:

"Medusa! Do not look at me!"

Or in a shop she might glance up

and see him near her, turning the pages of a book, fluttering the leaves impatiently— How she would make use of that instant for foresight and composure! But if it were he who had the warning, he who saw her first, and spoke, startling her unprepared— She urged a brief and passionate plea that that first moment might be hers.

"Even now," she thought, pinning on her hat, "he may be at the first corner or the second or the third. He may be across the table at dinner. He may be at the foot of the stairs."

And she descended the stairs slowly. And as she descended, some one came forward from among the shadows at the foot and stood waiting, silently, with the light shining on his upturned face. And for a moment she looked at him, dazed and wondering, and then, with a little sobbing cry, she flung herself tumultuously into his arms.



SONNET

Nora May French, in Memoriam.

I AM not bitter for myself alone;
But for those others who go stumbling out
Before their time, those fervid ones devout
Whose jewels unto men are naught but stone.
Their days defeated slacken in a groan
And meet the dark, knowing the maskèd rout
Was rendered vain by life's envenomed knout;
Doubting that time may for their blood atone.

Not for myself shed I the heavy tear;
But for my sister gasping in the dust,
Her meaning vague, her self-appointed bier
Crying her, "Offal!" She who carried song,
Gave it by pang to breathe its holy trust
And heard it silenced by the cursing throng.

LOUISE GEBHARD CANN.

Ainslee's Book of the Month

TWELVE MEN, by Theodore Dreiser; Boni & Liveright, New York.

THEODORE DREISER is one of the "Big Four"—artistically speaking—among living American novelists. The reviewer leaves it to you to name the other three. When he adds, however, that he divides the honors between two men and two women, it should be easy to complete the list.

In "Twelve Men" Dreiser gives us a series of vivid portraits of personalities that have impressed him. They range from his own brother, the song writer, Paul Dresser, to a celebrated physical culturist, to a village philanthropist who conducted his affairs on the theory that God would provide. The book purports to keep strictly to biographical events, and in the hands of any one else might easily have been a dull chronicle. But Dreiser vitalizes the most commonplace happenings. The result is better narrative than nine-tenths of the sorry stuff that masquerades as fiction.

Perhaps the best sketch is that of "Culhane, the Solid Man." The name thinly disguises the identity of a trainer whose farm near New York was patronized by ex-presidents, pugilists with ambitions to "come back," too-corpulent army officers and broken-down judges, bankers and bishops. It cost one hundred dollars a week to stay at Culhane's. The guest had to abide by arbitrary rules and endure being mercilessly bulldozed by the czar of the establishment. A superb athlete at sixty, when the author knew him, Culhane was intolerant of physical weakness in others. He would stalk along the edge of the swimming pool and jeer at men

with paunches or hollow chests. The ridicule he heaped on those who could not ride the vicious nags he chose for them makes grotesque reading.

Dreiser fairly revels in bringing out the characteristics of a man like the above. Vigorous crudities interest him more than subtlety. He is able to do an admirable portrait of his brother, because Paul was adventurous, but crude. The foreman of a railroad section gang under whom he worked attains heroic stature as "The Mighty Rourke." Even when he writes about an artist, it is because his subject is fundamentally coarse-grained. See "De Maupassant, Junior," and "Peter." Dreiser tries to make us feel that "Peter" was a marvel of culture. He merely succeeds in limning a newspaper cartoonist whose mind was packed with poorly catalogued facts and who found relaxation in practical jokes that a modern college boy would deem naïve. Nevertheless, the portrait is one of the most entertaining of the twelve.

Curiously enough, the only genuine exotic in the gallery is a financier described as X—. He was a Russian brought up in poverty in Brooklyn, who made a fortune on Wall Street and was destroyed by the interests he had antagonized. During the brief period of his glory he was a *bon viveur*. He had a studio in New York and a house on Long Island. At both places he gave entertainments for the sophisticated. He achieved an oriental magnificence. A few years later, Dreiser saw him on the street, tired and despondent after serving a term in prison. "Vanity, Vanity!" saith the preacher.

W. A. R.



In Broadway Playhouses

By Edwin Carty Ranck

Coöperative Theaters of the Future

IT is not improbable that the near future may see the coöperative theater a permanent institution in New York and other large cities. One of the interesting things about the recent actors' strike was the enlightening of the public on conditions in the New York playhouses that seemed as archaic as slavery. Such conditions cannot, of course, continue. The world has moved with dizzying rapidity in the past few years and the stage will have to get in line or step out. The most practical solution, from the actors' point of view, is the coöperative theater.

The coöperative theater is the theater of the future. Already the Theater Guild has paved the way with success. "John Ferguson," an intensely serious play, which was produced by the Theater Guild on May 12th, is still playing to capacity business at the Fulton Theater. Now, the Theater Guild is a coöperative organization. All of the actors in it started out with the same salaries. These were not very large either. But as the play succeeded and more money was taken in at the box office, the salaries were increased substantially—each player still receiving the same amount.

During the strike, while other theaters were playless and actorless and the

Great White Way was turned into the Great Dark Way, "John Ferguson" played to constantly increasing crowds. At the Fulton Theater every one was happy, and, as the old saying goes, "the goose hung high." 'Cause why? 'Cause the Fulton was, for the time being, a coöperative playhouse. The actors did not belong to the Producing Managers' Association. Each actor was his own manager. Therefore, no union metal could touch them.

"Come on in—the water's fine!" shouted Helen Westley of the Theater Guild, referring to the coöperative pond in which she and her fellow players were merrily splashing around.

Why not? Why don't many of the other actors form similar organizations and hoe their own theatrical rows? They would draw their salaries, get a share of the profits and be infinitely more independent.

Whoever was right or whoever was wrong in the recent theater war that dissolved so many lifelong friendships, the players who belong to the Actors' Equity Association were undeniably justified in demanding extra pay for extra performances and in limiting the time of rehearsing new productions to four weeks. When one stops to consider that in the past, actors have been

rehearsing new productions for eight and eleven weeks *without pay*, it seems high time for a change.

I venture the prediction that 1920 will see at least half a dozen coöperative theaters in New York conducted along the lines of the Theater Guild. Such a change in our theater would be no more revolutionary than an actors' union. The world either moves backward or forward; it doesn't stand still. The actors have formed their union. It is a step in the right direction and that direction leads logically to the coöperative theater.

The strike gave playgoers a chance to see a number of well-known managers appear as actors in their own productions. George M. Cohan, who was an actor long before he ever thought of managing other actors, jumped into one of the important rôles in his musical comedy, "A Royal Vagabond," and thus kept the footlights burning at the Cohan & Harris Theater. William A. Brady, who had acted and managed prize fighters before he threatened to bring Bernard Shaw over here, played the part of the butler in "At 9:45," the Owen Davis play that he is producing; and another manager, Charles Hopkins, builder of the Punch and Judy Theater, helped out Mr. Brady by also acting in this play.

One of the sensational features of the strike was George M. Cohan's spectacular resignation from The Lambs and The Friars and his threat never to set foot in them again. David Belasco also put himself on record by saying that he would never produce another play if the Actors' Equity Association should win the theatrical war. Marie Dressler retaliated by saying that she would never act again if the Producing Managers' Association were victorious. It would be very deplorable if Miss Dressler never acted again, for she is a born comedienne who has added much to the gayety of the theater world.

Eugene Walter, whose last two plays, "The Knife" and "The Assassin," were too strong even for Broadway consumption, tried his hand at Bolshevik drama in his latest production, "The Challenge," which is, if my memory doesn't deceive me, a revamping to suit modern conditions of an old Walter play yclept "The Undertow" written in the author's sophomoric days. "The Challenge," which is very similar in many respects to a play written by Joseph Medill Patterson and Harriet Ford called "The Fourth Estate," is the story of an idealistic newspaperman who is carried out to sea by the undertow of Bolshevism but who finally reaches safe harbor through the love of a woman.

There is much that is good in Mr. Walter's play. The great trouble with it, however, is that it never gets anywhere. It is incoherent, and illogical; and the "fine writing," "purple patches" or whatever you want to call them that Mr. Walter has thrown in with a spend-thrift hand, merely impede the action and bore the audience. Of course the whole Bolshevik movement is too fresh, too much in the public mind through newspaper headlines, to make this subject appeal to the average playgoer, who feels like throwing up both hands and yelling "Enough!" However, Mr. Walter could have made his play a real human document had he not "played safe" all the time.

The play opens with an incoherent prologue "Somewhere in France" in the course of which the hero, Richard Putnam, bores his sweetheart and the audience with a long, preachy speech in which he outlines his Bolshevik ideas. This, of course, is purely for motivational purposes. His sweetheart doesn't understand her hero's attitude, nor does the audience.

In the succeeding acts we see Putnam ranged with rabid Bolsheviks and refusing to marry his fiancée. There is no reason why he should not marry the

girl except that there would then be no play. So the audience is forced to swallow a ridiculous premise in order to taste an absurd conclusion.

What clash there is in the play is due to the efforts of the said sweetheart, *Mary Winthrop*, to win back "her man." In this she has the help of her brother, *Harry Winthrop*, a powerful capitalist who undertakes to bring *Putnam* to his senses by exposing the hypocrisy of the Bolshevik movement and of its followers. Just why any girl should want to marry a vacillating young ass who has kept her waiting for years is another mystery that Mr. Walter fails to explain.

At any rate, after Mr. Walter has led his audience to expect all sorts of dramatic things that never happen, we find the licked hero at the end of his play in the sheltering arms of the heroine. God's still in his heaven and, although we know that all's *wrong* with the world, it is made all *right* for the happy pair by the altruistic Mr. Walter.

The play is noteworthy, however, by reason of the extraordinarily good acting of Allan Dinehart as *Richard Putnam*. I have not seen better acting than his in a blue moon. Here is a young actor who will bear watching. Holbrook Blinn lends his engaging personality and distinctive art to the part of *Harry Winthrop*, but it is not a sufficiently meaty part for him. It is to be hoped that Mr. Blinn will some day get the sort of part that his training and ability entitle him to.

I cannot close this account of "The Challenge" without mentioning the newspaper scene in the second act. Here is a real newspaper office; it smells and looks like a newspaper office. Mr. Walter was a newspaperman for years and he is to be congratulated upon a genuine achievement in giving his audience an authentic glimpse into the land behind the daily newspaper.

Nor must I fail to mention the acting of Leonard Doyle as *Harry Day*, a political reporter. This stage reporter does not carry a notebook around with him all the time. He is a *real* reporter. Mr. Doyle's *Harry Day* might have stepped straight from the noisome atmosphere of a Hearst newspaper. No greater compliment to his acting ability could be paid him. Charles A. Selton as a police reporter; Hallett Thompson as a city editor and Fred Karr as a copy reader carry with them the smudge of everyday printer's ink. To me that one newspaper scene nearly retrieves the artificiality of the rest of the play.

Another Bolshevik play that was produced the same week as Mr. Walter's was "The Red Dawn" by Thomas Dixon, Junior, author of "The Leopard's Spots" and other lurid novels. It was a very funny play—far too funny to review here.

The most novel play of the new season is "A Voice in the Dark," another murder-mystery, keep-you-guessing production, but one with a brand-new idea. It is the first play to come from the typewriter of Ralph E. Dyar, a Western newspaperman who hit upon the plan of describing a crime through the agency of a blind man and a deaf woman. It is through their testimony that the murderer is discovered. During the scene described by the deaf woman, not a word is spoken, the action being carried on by pantomime, and the scene described by the blind man is acted in darkness. In other words, the audience is supposed to be deaf and blind for the time being.

One of those hated villains that everyone likes to see killed is found dead. *Blanche Warren*, the heroine of the play, is suspected. A rich and crotchety deaf woman saw her with the revolver in her hand shortly before the body was discovered. As the deaf woman begins her narrative the scene is acted

out in dumb show by the principals—just like a motion picture 'cut in.' Then the blind man gives his facts in the case and the scene is acted in the dark. Of course the person least likely to have been suspected was the real criminal.

Except for the novelty of the deaf woman, the blind man—and a locomotive that seemed about to run into the audience but had nothing whatever to do with the action of the play—the plot is the conventional murder mystery.

However, "A Voice in the Dark" is destined for a big success. Not only has the play more original features than any other play I have seen at this writing, but the acting is quite exceptional. Miss Florine Arnold as *Mrs. Maria Lydiard*, the deaf woman, is amazingly skillful in depicting the facial expression and fitful outbursts that characterize so many deaf persons. It is a masterpiece of character acting. I know of no one else on our stage, with the exception of Rose Coghlan, who could duplicate Miss Arnold's feat.

William B. Mack, who always gives us of his best, remains true to his last as *Joe Crampton*, the old blind newsman. This is as graphic and true a visualization of a blind man as Miss Arnold's conception of the deaf woman. Mr. Mack not only sinks his own personality in the part, but he manages to hold his audience tensely alert during the dramatic scene in which he describes the voice in the dark of the woman who confessed to the murder. Not since "Madame X" have I seen a more dramatic stage episode than that in which the brother of the murderess writhes in agony when called upon to speak in the presence of the blind man. He knows that *Crampton* will recognize his voice and that in this way he will betray his own sister, yet he has to speak. The tension of this scene is held until the sister herself suddenly enters, not knowing what has happened, and speaks. Instantly the old blind man

is alert, quivering with suppressed excitement.

"It is the voice," he says, "the voice of the woman I heard at the railroad station!"

There is real drama for you, and I must confess that it held me breathless in my seat. Talk about hearing a pin drop! Why, if the feather from some woman's hat had touched the back of her seat, it would have sounded like a covey of quail in full flight!

I can enthusiastically recommend "A Voice in the Dark" to those playgoers who like gooseflesh thrills. For a first play, Mr. Dyar's melodrama is a remarkable achievement. It is far and away the best murder mystery since "On Trial" and "The Thirteenth Chair."

Bartley Campbell once wrote a thrilling melodrama entitled "The White Slave," and the tortured heroine, finding that the villain is still pursuing her, turns upon him fiercely and exclaims: "Rags are royal raiment when worn for virtue's sake!" Well, "Those Who Walk in Darkness" is that sort of a play. Mr. Owen Davis is the perpetrator. It is the time-honored story of the woman with a past, who, à la *Paula Tanqueray*, marries a good man and tries to live it down. But it won't go down any more than castor oil. However, she saves another girl from walking in darkness and wins the respect of her enemies in ample time for a typical Owen Davis ending.

The only new touch to the play is the stage setting for the first act, which is the interior of a night-lunch wagon on a New York street. It is entirely unnecessary but it is good. This is the work of Irving Pitchel, a young Harvard man, who has been doing excellent work as a stage director in Pittsburgh. All of the other sets show his artistic touch. If the play were as good as Mr. Pitchel's settings it would be a wonder. Incidentally, on account of

the actors' strike, Pitchel played a rather small part in the production and did it so well that he was kept on.

The audience got many good laughs out of the tragic scenes of the play. When it comes to sentiment and tragedy, Mr. Davis is a born humorist. To paraphrase a quip of W. S. Gilbert, Mr. Davis' serious moments are funny without being vulgar. But one line in the play has the authentic touch. *Alec Breen* is discussing the stinginess of the hero's uncle who has just died.

"Why," he says, "he was too close to give his own son a middle name."

We can forgive Mr. Davis much for the sake of that quip.

Grace George's new play, "She Would and She Did," is the work of Mark W. Reed, a student in "English 47," Professor Baker's play-writing course at Harvard. It is the first Harvard play to reach Broadway since Cleves Kinkead's phenomenally successful drama, "Common Clay." Professor Baker, by the way, has made arrangements with Oliver Morosco to produce plays written by young Harvard playwrights

which are, in the estimation of Mr. Morosco and Professor Baker, adjudged worthy of professional production. This is expected to result in a whole flock of new Harvard plays. Not since 1910, when John Craig, the Boston manager, announced his annual prize-play contest, has there been so much excitement in Cambridge.

The success of Mrs. Lillian Trimble Bradley as producer of "The Crimson Alibi" has led to her engagement as general stage director for George Broadhurst. She will have absolute control of the staging of all Mr. Broadhurst's productions.

Miss Elisabeth Marbury, who gave up all her stage work in New York during the war to devote herself to the relief of war-stricken people in Europe, was recently decorated with a medal by Queen Elizabeth of Belgium in recognition of services rendered to that stricken country since 1914.

The play may be the thing to catch the conscience of the king, but it butters no parsnips when the actors go on a strike.



A DANCE OF SILHOUETTES

I SAW them dance in silhouette,
A nymph, a cupid, and a faun,
Like graceful fantoccini shown
Against the promise of a dawn;
I saw them glide and pirouette,
Brush fingers, seem to turn to stone,
Then melt again to fluid jet
On which some silver wind had blown.

There was a quiet in their dance
No solid colors could possess,
Hint of a thousand charms of face
And form unmarred by fulsomeness;
All of the wonder of a trance
In viewing, free from time and place,
Woman and love and man enhance
Beauty and lift it into space.

RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

AGAIN an AINSLEE's author has scored. Since the publication of Katharine Hill's first novelette, "Chameleons Up-to-Date," in the September issue, we have received many enthusiastic letters from readers. One correspondent writes: "Miss Hill's work at once struck me as that of one who knows the world of which she writes, one who lives, moves, and has her being among, and speaks the same language as the class in which she places her characters." We agree. Katharine Hill's stories ring true and never fail to be enthralling narrative. We intend to give you more of them.

THE complete novelette next month will be by her. It is called "The Half-Gods Go." The heroine, Bianca, is the more or less unwanted daughter of a musical-comedy star. She has been brought up by relatives in England, while her mother, Crystal, leads a merry existence, surrounded by admirers. But the time comes when Bianca must be introduced to her mother's world. Crystal sends one of her most devoted satellites, Ned Wantage, to escort the girl on board an ocean liner bound for New York. The older woman is supposed to join them, but misses the boat, and Bianca and Wantage are thrown a great deal in each other's company on the way across. Bianca is beautiful and unspoiled. In comparison with her, Wantage realizes that Crystal is merely a "half-god"—

or goddess! The best part of the action takes place in New York and Atlantic City. An aviator appears as a rival of Wantage, and there are surprising complications which we shall not be tempted to give away in advance. It is a brilliant tale.

SHORT stories listed for December include the work of several of your favorites and of some newcomers. "Bait," by Elizabeth Newport Hepburn, raises an always interesting question. Is an artist justified in marrying to advance himself socially and professionally, rather than for love? Of course, there are two women in the case. Both of them are devoted to the hero. Which one does he choose? "The Magic Enterprise," by Katherine Wilson; "The Intruder," by Pauline Brooks; and "Innocents at Large," by Nancy Boyd, all turn on novel situations between men and women. George B. Jenkins, Jr., makes his debut next month with a Parisian story, "The Amiable Madame Rambeau."

IN her "More Super-Women" series, Anice Terhune will tell you about Thérèse Humbert, by all odds the most amazing woman swindler of modern times. There will be a long installment of our May Edginton serial, "The Way the Wind Blows," and Louise Rice will spin the second of her American gypsy yarns in the series, "Romany Hearts."



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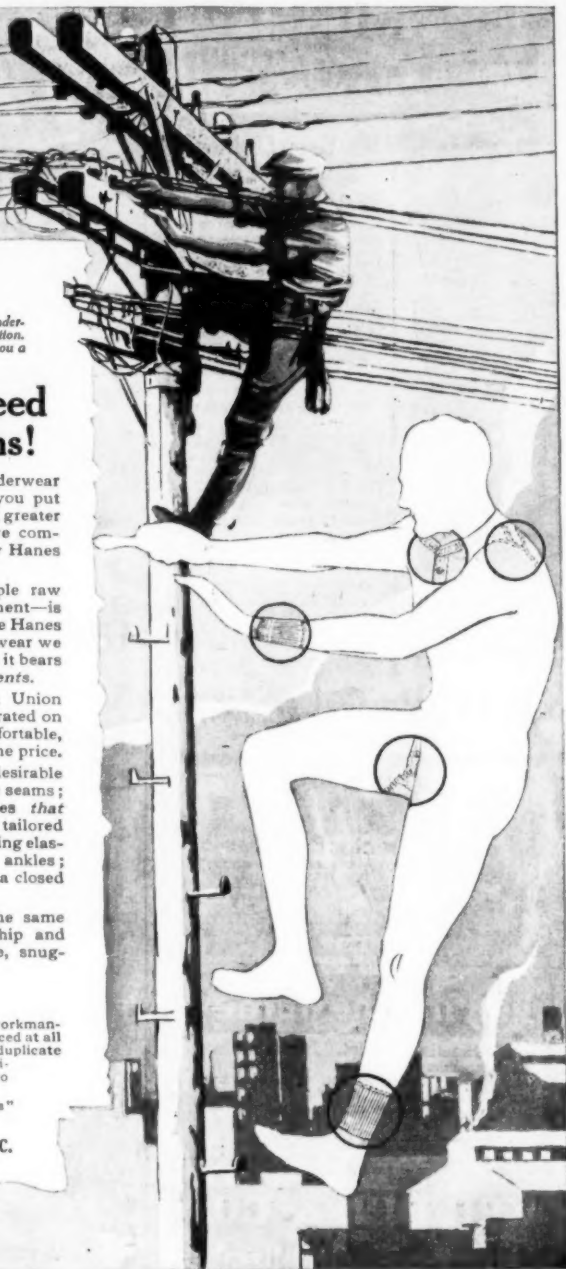
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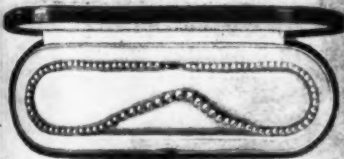


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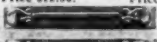
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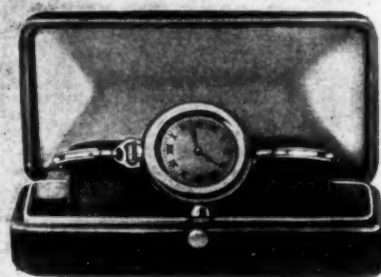
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THE policy of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE in working with no other impulse than the desire constantly to publish the best magazine money and effort can produce, finds a demonstration in the prize-story contest, particulars of which are printed below.

THE DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE is going to conduct a \$10,000.00 prize-story contest. It will give \$5,000.00 to the person who submits the best 70,000 to 80,000 word detective story, \$3,000.00 for the second best, and \$2,000.00 for the third.

ALSO, the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE will gladly negotiate for any of the stories that are considered available.

SHOULD any author submit a story which does not take the first prize he may withdraw it from the contest, if he so desires.

THE decision as to the rating of the stories will be rendered by three judges. These judges will be the two distinguished authors, Arthur B. Reeve and Albert Payson Terhune, and the editor of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

IN order to be considered in this contest all stories must be received by January 1, 1920.

REALIZE that you do not need to be a writer of detective stories to have a winning story in this contest, nor do you have to be an "author" at all, for that matter. Do you know that one of the best writers of detective stories to-day had never written a story of any kind till, on a dare, she wrote a story which was one of the most successful of the year?

ALL stories should be sent to the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, Prize-Story Contest, Street & Smith Corporation, publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., who will be very glad to furnish any further particulars.

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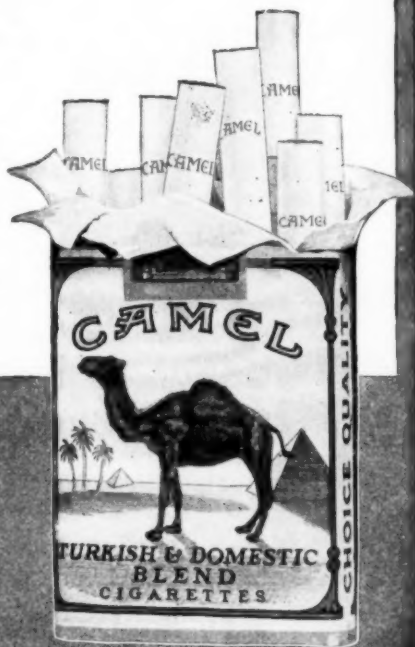
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